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ART AND ARCHITECTURE  
BIKANER STATE

HERMAN GOETZ





MAHARAJA ANUP SINGHJI ON HORSEBACK  
(1675/8-1698). Miniature ca. 1690-95. Lallgarh Palace, Bikānēr.

THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE  
OF  
BIKANER STATE

*by*  
HERMANN GOETZ

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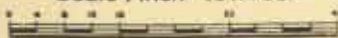
Lieutenant-General His Highness Maharajadhiraj Raj Rajeshwar  
Narendra Shiromani Maharaja Sri Sadul Singhji Bahadur,  
G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., C.V.O., Maharaja of Bikaner

the worthy heir and successor  
of a long line of  
Great Rathor Empire Builders and Reformers  
this first attempt  
to raise  
the great achievements  
of  
Bikaner History and Art  
from  
romance and tradition  
into the light of modern research  
is dedicated  
in the hour of the birth of a Modern India  
to which  
he and his great father  
have contributed so much  
in deepest respect and gratefulness  
for  
the sympathetic assistance received  
in the completion of this work  
and in the hope  
that  
it may initiate a systematic exploration  
of  
the great treasures  
of  
Rajput tradition.



# BIKANER STATE

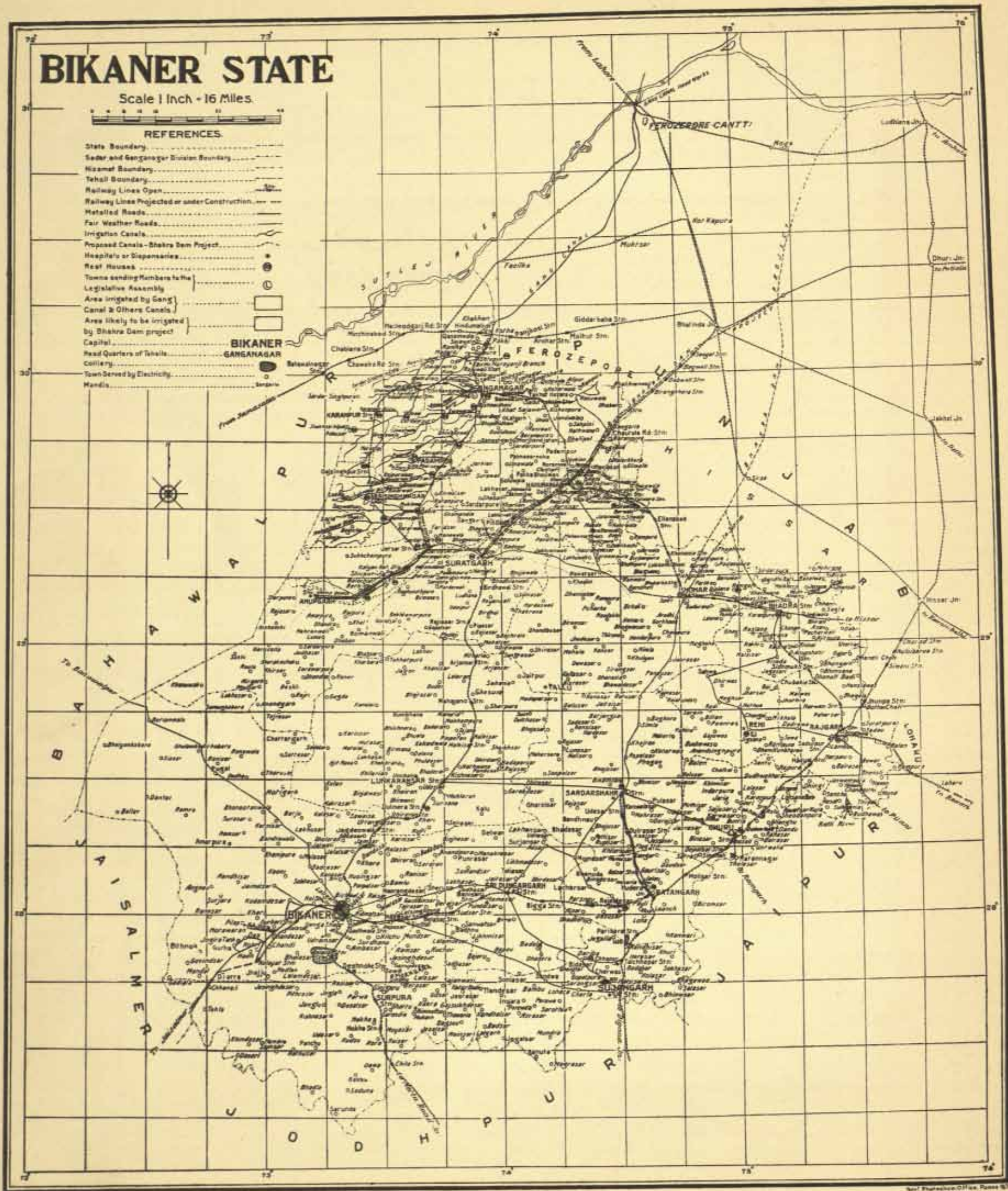
Scale 1 Inch = 16 Miles



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- State Boundary.....
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- Fair Weather Roads.....
- Irrigation Canals.....
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- Hospitals or Dispensaries.....
- Rest Houses.....
- Towns sending Members to the Legislative Assembly.....
- Area irrigated by Gang Canal & Others Canals.....
- Area likely to be irrigated by Bhakra Dam project.....
- Capital.....
- Head Quarters of Tehsils.....
- Cantery.....
- Town Served by Electricity.....
- Havels.....

BIKANER  
GANAGANAGAR





## FOREWORD

**R**AJPUTANA is one of the unexplored regions of Indian history. It is now obvious that the solution of many of the baffling puzzles of Indian history will be found buried beneath the sands of the Great Indian Desert, a major portion of which lies within the area of Rajputana. It was in historic times that the desert encroached on this area, for we know from the Vedas that the sacred river, Saraswati, the bed of which is traceable and is occasionally flooded even now, watered the territory of what is now the Bikaner State and flowed into the Gulf of Kutch. That the Saraswati was a great river is obvious from the Vedic hymns. Today it disappears into the sands of Bikaner.

From the evidence collected by Sir Aurel Stein, who made a preliminary exploration of the valley of the Saraswati at my suggestion and at the invitation of His Highness the Maharaja's Government, it is clear that the area was the seat of a great civilisation, now no doubt, buried under the sand. The heart of the Mohenjodaro civilisation was most probably the Saraswati valley and not the Indus valley, as is commonly held on the ground that the first site excavated was there: and in any case it extended right into the heart of Rajputana. It is not possible to say when the Saraswati was buried in the sands: but Kalidasa's allusion to *antar salila Saraswati* (Saraswati bearing water inside) shows that by his time the process had been completed and the river Saraswati had become merely a matter of tradition.

In recorded history the Bikaner area becomes important with the rise of the Yaudheyas. In the Mahabharata the Yaudheyas are alluded to as ruling in South Punjab and northern Rajputana. With the rise of Kushan power they retreated into the desert, and about 145 they started the war which cleared the Kushans from North India. Rudradaman I claims to have broken the revolt. Coins bearing the legend Yaudheya Ganasya Jaya (the victory of the Yaudheya republic) have been discovered which attest to the fact of their ultimate triumph over the foreign invaders. Till the rise of the Gupta Empire the Yaudheya republic held most of the area of Bikaner and the Arjunayanas—another republican tribe—held sway over the present Jaipur area.

The Yaudheya republic disappears from Indian history by about the fifth century and the history of the Bikaner area is again lost in mist. The Bhati Rajputs overran the territory in the 10th century, pressed south by the changing conditions in the Punjab, as place-names like Bhatner (now known as Hanumangarh) bear witness. In fact in the Middle Ages, the area was mainly Bhati territory and it is from them that the Rathors took possession.

Owing mainly to its inaccessibility, the arts and crafts of Bikaner have maintained an individuality which is well brought out in Dr. Goetz's book. With its adhesion to the Moghul system, the general art tradition of the Empire penetrated into Rajputana and created what has been called the Rajput school of painting. It is now clear that this school, though it possesses some general characteristics, cannot be satisfactorily defined as belonging to a single tradition. Dr. Goetz's book is of special value in emphasising the individuality of the different schools of Rajputana art.

It is a matter of great satisfaction to me that the Bikaner Government was able to persuade Dr. Goetz to undertake this work. He has brought to bear on it the results of wide research on Indian art history, a mind trained to art criticism and an immense amount of knowledge based on many years of labour in different parts of India. Apart from its value as an interpretation of the art traditions of Rajputana, the book also opens up many new fields and raises some major issues of Indian history on which further research may produce important results.

This work was rendered possible only through the discriminating generosity of His Highness Maharaja Sri Sadul Singhji, for whose love for his State and the tradition it represents the present volume will be a standing testimony.

Bikaner,  
30th January, 1948.

K. M. PANIKKAR,  
Prime Minister, Bikaner State.





## PREFACE

WHEN in October, 1945, Mr. K. M. Panikkar, the Prime Minister of Bikaner State, invited me to advise him on the modernization of the Ganga Golden Jubilee Museum, I did not expect that from this interview a survey of the history and art of this well-known Rajput kingdom would develop. A famous scholar himself, Mr. Panikkar had, of course, been acquainted with the Bardic and Historical Survey begun during the first World War in Jodhpur and Bikaner territory, by the late Dr. L. P. Tessitori whose work was brought to an untimely end by a fatal typhoid infection. When the excavations of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa revealed to us a highly developed pre-Aryan phase of Indian civilization, Mr. Panikkar immediately realized the importance of Dr. Tessitori's discoveries in the Ghaggar Valley. Thus the course of this dry bed as far as Bahawalpur State was explored by Sir Aurel Stein in 1941. But his retirement left his notes and collections incomplete and their editing has been undertaken only recently, after his death, by Mr. Krishnadev. Finally there came the discovery of an interesting collection of old paintings in His Highness' palaces which made necessary a modification of the theories developed by A. K. Coomaraswamy. Historical research had started in Bikaner under the late Maharaja Sri Ganga Singhji, and the study of manuscripts and traditions was taken up by the Anup Singh Sanskrit Library first organized by Professor Kunhan Raja, and by the Sadul Rajasthani Research Institute, not to speak of private collectors and scholars such as Mr. Agarchand Nahta. It seemed desirable to coordinate all these studies and to integrate them into a systematic survey of the known monuments.

Thanks to the gracious interest shown by His Highness and the most liberal support of Mr. Panikkar, I was able during the few weeks for which my services had been lent by the Baroda State government, to make a careful study of all the monuments at Bikaner, to undertake research tours to Devikund, Nagnechiji, Bhinasar, Kodamdesar, Gajner, Kolayat, Pugal, Suratgarh, Hanumangarh, the Yaudheya mounds between these last two places, Pallu, Deshnok and Morkhana, and to collect information on many other ruins.

I was able to rely on the indefatigable collaboration of Mr. Mahtab Singh, Under-Secretary to the Government Public Works Department, who acted as permanent liaison officer between Baroda and Bikaner, and who undertook innumerable enquiries on my behalf, or arranged for drawings, plans, photographs, extracts and translations. A no less helpful collaborator proved to be Kunwar Sagat Singh, the Curator of the Ganga Golden Jubilee Museum, who made the necessary arrangements for and accompanied us on, all our tours and inspections. I also enjoyed the friendly assistance of Dr. Dasharatha Sharma, tutor to the Heir-Apparent and a historian of wide reputation, of Mr. K. Madhava Krishna Sharma, M.O.L., the librarian of the Anup Singh Sanskrit Library, and of Mr. Dina Nath Khatri, M.A., its Hindī-Rājasthānī specialist, especially in identifying the illustrations of the several Rasikapriya sets. Other valuable help was granted by Maharaj Sri Mandhata Singh, a former Prime Minister and a distinguished art collector, and by Mr. Agarchand Nahta, the leading Jain scholar of Bikaner. Mr. Kunjilal Gahlot and, later on, Messrs. K. L. Syed and Co. of Palanpur worked as our photographers, taking several hundred photos; a group of hereditary court painters (in the "Rajput" manner), under the guidance of Mr. Hisham-ud-din, took copies in colour of wall and ceiling paintings and other decorations not easily removable; and a staff of draughtsmen placed at our disposal by the P.W.D. prepared groundplans, sections, and drawings of architectural detail. It has of course not been possible to include more than a part of this vast material in the book.

Other assistance was kindly lent by authorities and scholars outside Bikaner. By granting facilities for visiting Jodhpur, Mandor, Mertha and Nagaur the Jodhpur State authorities permitted me to study the parallel monuments of that brother Rathor kingdom. The Director-General of Archaeology of India permitted me to consult the unpublished notes and finds of Sir Aurel Stein, and I have likewise to thank Dr. V. S. Agrawala of the Museum of Central Asian Antiquities, New Delhi, for most valuable suggestions with regard to the "Suratgarh" terracottas in the Bikaner Museum and their relation to the



Gupta terracottas excavated at Ahichchattrā-Ramgarh. Professor Muhammad Shafi, former Principal of the Oriental College, Lahore, and Professor H. K. Sherwani, Hyderabad, have been so kind as to identify the illustrations to Sa'di's *Gulistan*, Assar's *Mihr-u-Mushtari*, etc. Dr. Moreswar Dikshit of the Deccan College Research Institute and Mr. P. K. Gode of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, have provided me with informations on various related subjects, and Mr. Umakant P. Shah, Baroda, on problems of Jain and Gujarati sculpture. Last but not least I have to thank my wife, Mrs. A. Goetz, whose collaboration in searching libraries, collecting, checking and arranging extracts and notes, and transcribing my drafts, has alone enabled me to complete this book within a limited time and in addition to my other pressing duties.

The manuscript of this book was ready for the press when the great exhibition of Indian Art was held at the Royal Academy, London, during the winter 1947-48, and the Royal India Society, London, kindly agreed to bring the publication out under their auspices. Though various unavoidable circumstances, especially the printing difficulties at present encountered everywhere, caused some delay, we expect that the publication prepared with so much effort and industry and brought out by Messrs. Bruno Cassirer, Oxford, whose name has long been well-known among art publishers, will profit from the interest in Indian art aroused by this first comprehensive presentation of India's treasures before the world.

In compiling this survey of Bikaner art I have encountered many difficulties which, however, have contributed to the fascination of my task. Rajput history and Rajput art represent ground at present hardly trodden and often very controversial. The Rajput problem has given occasion to much controversy, mainly in consequence of an undue simplification and exaggeration of the points at issue. Later Rajput history has been overshadowed by that of the contemporary Muslim Kingdoms. The Rajput accounts have not yet been critically edited, and the songs and chronicles elaborated into the gazetteers, Tod's *Annals* and Forbes' *Rās Mālā* in most cases show events dramatized from the one or other partisan point of view and clashing with each other, and with the Muslim chronicles. Tod's account, which is still the best handbook, presents the Udaipur and Jodhpur case, and thus remains unsatisfactory with regard to their opponents, Bikaner or Amber-Jaipur. And the Muslim records, indispensable for the chronological framework, offer hardly more than casual hints of the history of the Rajput states, so far as their princes and soldiers had an—often suppressed or ignored—share in contemporary Muslim politics. The historian trying to bring some order into this often contradictory or vague information has at present no other course than to weigh the pros and cons of possible interpretations, quite aware that later study of sources at present not accessible may reveal many details in a different light. He must be satisfied with discovering the broad outlines of events and tracing the general tendencies of the successive periods.

For without this historical background any approach to art history and appreciation is impossible. All art is the expression and mirror of the life, ideals, aspirations and fancies of its time. As Rajput history has been overshadowed by contemporary Indo-Muslim history, Rajput art, standing between traditional Hindu and Indo-Muslim art, has likewise been neglected. So far we have for its earlier mediaeval phases only the researches of Dr. Stella Kramrisch, and for Rajput painting the pioneer work of A. K. Coomaraswamy. The former scholar treated Rajput art as an aspect of high mediaeval Hindu culture, the latter regarded his subject, with less justification, as the independent Hindu counterpart to Mughal painting. Rajput architecture, not fitting so easily into this picture, was, therefore, ignored after the earlier investigations of T. T. Hendley and Sir Swinton Jacob. The problem, as a whole, suffered through that simplification of perspective prevalent during the last decades which tended to treat all later Hindu art as a mere decadence of a long-past classic period, ignoring the everlasting creative impulses, revivals, revolutions and declines pulsating through Indian art not less after than before the Muslim invasion. An art history of this period had, thus, to be built up from bottom. I had been fortunate enough to have been able in the course of many travels to study a considerable part of the Rajput, as well as of the related Muslim, Gujarati and Deccani monuments on the spot.



## PREFACE

In my approach I have not been dogmatic. I have, on the one hand, made use of the pure style and form critical methods of H. Wölfflin and J. Strzygowski, on the other of the culture psychological analyses of Dvořák, Hamann, Benesch, Schneider and Huizinga. Though this combination has proved very fruitful, it must still leave many details open to discussion through those same difficulties of all pioneer work which leave so many historical details debatable. As long as all monuments are not yet surveyed, new explorations and discoveries must lead to further corrections of the views here expounded. I regret, therefore, that I could not always produce all the arguments for my conclusions. But they would have burdened this book with innumerable footnotes and appendices, and so I hope that I shall find an opportunity to discuss individual important problems elsewhere. Moreover, the discovery of thousands of miniatures in the spring of 1947, when the manuscript was already far advanced necessitated an alteration of the original plan. The envisaged detailed catalogue of miniatures had to be sacrificed, so that more space could be devoted to the historical and critical discussion of the immensely increased material.

One positive result I trust is the reconstruction of a historical background not of heroic romance but of the interrelations of power politics, less colourful perhaps, but dovetailed into the all-Indian picture and unrolling the vast panorama of the rise, flourishing, decline, collapse and rebirth of art and of the cultural interrelations between the past and the present, and between the Rajputs and their neighbours. The mediaeval period between the Huna-Gurjara and the Muslim invasions shows itself as one growth, the latter Rajput period between the collapse of the 13th century and the coming of the British as another. They formed two interruptions bridged by the conscious assimilation of earlier traditions, two cultural individualities basically interrelated, yet of different stature. Rajput art appears in a different light, giving and receiving, in fruitful intercourse with its Hindu and Muslim contemporaries, in endless interactions and variations.

On the negative side stand many uncertainties, gaps and working theories which only future research can correct or solve. There are obvious lacunæ, in addition to the already mentioned need for a critical edition of the old historical documents. Tessitori's survey of the devali (paliya) and govardhan inscriptions has covered only a small fraction of the state area, and the funeral stones of most of the historically important sites have not yet been studied. The mounds of the Ghaggar Valley need excavation. The temples of Taranagar, Nohar, etc. must be further explored. The important bronzes of the Chintamani temple and of the Karkhana Ganga-Jal need a special monograph. The many miniatures lately discovered have been examined only superficially. The Rasikpriya illustrations need a special study. The art of all the adjoining states is little explored, whether Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Udaipur or Bundi. Rajput history and Rajput art still are virgin fields for the research scholar.

Finally it will be advisable to explain some technicalities. First, the terminology of historical periods, the use of which is not uniform. I have used the following terms: classic period for the 3rd-7th centuries, i.e. the Gupta Age and its aftermath; early Mediaeval for the 8th—early 10th centuries (Pratihara period); high Mediaeval for the late 10th—late 12th or early 13th centuries (the Rajput successor kingdoms of the Pratiharas); the late Mediaeval for the 13th—early 16th centuries; finally Mughal period. My reasons are that the term Middle Ages has received not only a chronological, but also a very specific culture-historical content, as a period of early and high feudal political structure, aristocratic culture, traditionalist art and scholastic-mystic religion. It is true that the feudal structure of society and aristocratic culture have been preserved in Rajputana much longer, but both Rajput art proper and Vaishnava mysticism have been popular movements so that from this point of view also Rajputana may be compared with contemporary Mughal civilization. The second question concerns the transcriptions of Indian terms. I have followed the British system, which is the most familiar for Persian and Hindi, but have avoided diacritical signs except for long vowels, in order not to deter non-specialist readers. Finally some abbreviations quoted in connection with the paintings in Lallgarh Palace: DR—Drawing Room, DN—Dining Room, B1-4—Guest Bed Room 1-4.



## BIKANER STATE

In concluding these remarks I should like to reiterate my thanks to all who have so devotedly cooperated in producing this publication, from the first surveys to its final completion, and especially to His Highness the Maharaja and his far-sighted Prime Minister, Mr. K. M. Panikkar, who first envisaged it, made it possible thanks to their most liberal and energetic support, and have left me all liberty in expounding my results and conclusions, even where in some points I had to disagree with cherished traditions, the nucleus of which always proved trustworthy. Their establishment on firm historical ground is more than a compensation for the loss of a few glittering embroideries.

Thus I hope that this volume will encourage other governments and other scholars to take up research in the so long neglected field of Rajput history and art, nay in the whole field of later Indian history and art, and that they will prove to the world that India is not merely the passive heir of a great past, but the active trustee of a living tradition, subject to change and vicissitude, but never extinguished, capable of recuperating, capable of adapting herself to new needs and tasks, capable of producing in the future no less great and admirable things than she achieved in the past.

*Baroda, January 1948*

H. GOETZ.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## 1. *Bikānēr and Her Background*

DEEP IN THE THAR DESERT, behind endless waves of sand dunes, lies Bikānēr, one of the most interesting centres of later Indian art. Even before reaching Mount Ābū the traveller from Bombay leaves the fertile plains of Gujarāt, with their rice and cotton fields, green hedges and groves, and enters the arid high plateau of Rājputānā, broken by the wild cliffs and mountain ranges of the Aravallis, on which stand lonely castles and fortified temples. In the valleys there are small fertile oases watered by irrigation dams or by the waterbags which bullocks or camels draw from deep wells. Camel caravans or herds of sheep, goats and horses file past, led by sinewy, sturdy, rather wild looking people. Women, veiled and shy, climb down the steps of deep baoris (wells), in glowing yellow, orange or red costumes, balancing sets of glittering brass pots on top of their proud heads. Riders pass in pink, yellow and green coats, often with a fine old sword. Behind Jodhpur the last cliffs disappear in an endless rolling plain, in winter covered with thin fields, but already in March burning like a furnace. Beyond the old picturesque fortress of Nāgaur there begins at last wave after wave of sand dunes interspersed with patches of yellowish, prickly bhurat grass, thorny shrubs, or here and there some acacia near a salt-encrusted depression or lonely well: a solitude, inhabited by foxes, hares and antelopes, and broken at long intervals by a thorny cattle enclosure or primitive mud huts, and here or there a temple behind strong red sandstone walls, or the low palatial house of some lord or merchant. At last, near the frontiers of Bahāwalpur, the sand dunes give way to a not less monotonous plain of hard clay, which spreads up to the Indus.

This is the Thar Desert, for millennia a no-man's country, Jangaladeśa, the "jungle country," crossed only by occasional caravans or half-wild nomads. But this same forbidding desert has nurtured a tough race of brave and gallant soldiers and for centuries protected a state which has played and still plays a leading role in India: Bikānēr. Like a Fata Morgana, its capital rises from the very midst of this desert, a great town of red and yellow sandstone, with richly decorated houses rising high over its bustling streets and tall temple spires overlooking the once mighty fortifications. Outside the town there lies a gigantic fort, surrounded by a deep ditch and a double line of mighty bastions, behind which many-storeyed palaces of yellow and red sandstone, marble and encaustic tiles tower over luxurious palm gardens.

Today Bikānēr has lost something of its forbidding situation. Railways connect the capital with Jodhpur, Jaipur, Delhi and the Panjāb. Motor roads radiate to charming environs, such as the lake and hunting resorts of Gajner, the temples of Deshnoke, Sheobarī and Nāgnechījī, the royal mausolea at the Devikund tank; or to the aerodrome, the collieries of Pālāna and the quarries of Khari. A green belt surrounds the old town to the East and North, where the Mahārājā's beautiful palace and the fine modern government buildings, schools, hospitals and new residential quarters stretch over laboriously watered gardens. A whole province of the state, at its northern frontier, is now thickly-populated agricultural land, irrigated by a canal from the Sutlej. For the late Mahārājā, Sir Gangā Singhjī, famous as the founder of the Chamber of Princes, co-sponsor of the first parliamentary reforms in British India, representative of India in the British war cabinet (from 1917-18) and at the League of Nations, had during the last half century led Bikānēr on the path of a modern state; and his son and successor, Mahārājā Sādul Singhjī, is continuing his work. In a country so cut off from the rest of India these reforms had come late and had been revolutionary to a society which had been familiar only with ways of life which now seem mediaeval to us. The last Mahārājā's elder brother and predecessor, Mahārājā Dūngar Singhjī (1872-87), had begun with cautious reforms. For the feudal anarchy, which in the 18th and early 19th centuries had invited and facilitated the British conquest of India, had in Bikānēr



lasted as late as the reign of Mahārājā Sardār Singhji (1851-72). Before a modernization of the state could be envisaged, the authority which the Mahārājā's rule had enjoyed in the Golden Age of feudalism, had first to be restored, and the state's finances to be put on a sound basis. But even Sir Gangā Singhji, though preoccupied with modern world- and all-Indian politics, had nevertheless been forced to quash the intrigues of refractory feudal lords.

Thus Bikanēr State has preserved the old Rājput political, cultural and artistic traditions, completely unadulterated, until sixty years ago; and even today very many of them are still alive. It is true that Bikanēr is not so well known to tourists and scholars as other Rājput states like Jaipur, Jodhpur or Udaipur, which can boast of a more attractive scenery and of greater economic resources. But the very remoteness of Bikanēr has preserved the heritage of the past much better than in the more accessible states. This heritage is great and can well compare with that of her more fortunate neighbours and not seldom surpasses it.

The Golden Age of Rājput civilization was closely linked with the destinies of the Mughal Empire. As generals and governors of the emperors of Delhi, the Rājput princes had not been dependent merely on the resources of their own states, but could also dispose of considerable revenues from other, wealthier parts of India. At the Mughal court the rulers of Bikanēr had been second only to one other Rājput state, Amber-Jaipur, which they had sometimes even surpassed. For in this service it was not so much natural wealth and economic resources which counted, but manpower and courage, which were provided nowhere more abundantly than in the hard, poor desert of Bikanēr. Also the forbidding character of the Thar Desert, and consequently its security, has always attracted the wealth of the outside world. Here the Jain and Hindu bankers and merchants whose business reached (and still reaches) over the whole of Northern India, built their houses, settled their families, deposited their treasures, and constructed temples and upāśras (monasteries). The rājās of Bikanēr were wise enough not to scare them away by excessive exactions. Thus the cultural life of Bikanēr, of its court and its mercantile upper class, flourished through the centuries largely owing to the treasures flowing in from other parts of India, acquired by the valour of its soldiers and the security of its capital.

The capital has, through all this long period, been taken by enemy army only twice—in 1542 and 1707. On both occasions it fell by treachery, in 1542 into the hands of rājā Māldeo of Jodhpur—Bikanēr had not then received its strong fortifications—and later to Ajit Singh. Besieged time and again, town and fort have held out, often for many months, until the enemy, deprived of water and food supplies by a relentless guerilla warfare in his rear, was forced to retreat. All these sieges were events in the inter-dynastic wars between the Jodhpur and Bikanēr branches of the Rāthor Rājputs. The sieges of Bikanēr were answered by similar sieges of Jodhpur, and the occupation of Bikanēr by Māldeo ended in the occupation of Jodhpur by Rāi Singh. Neither Mughals nor Marāthas ever advanced as far as Bikanēr, though both temporarily occupied Nāgaour. Even periods of trouble proved in some way fortunate, for they brought refugee craftsmen from the richer provinces of India, and whenever in the 11th to 13th, late 14th, early 16th and late 18th centuries, chaos prevailed in the Panjāb, much of the trade between India and the West had to pass through the Thar desert, Bikanēr and Jaiselmer.

Thus the rulers and rich merchants of Bikanēr could not only collect art treasures, but offer shelter to first-class artists from Central Rājputānā, Gujarāt, the Mughal court at Delhi, Lahore, and even from the Deccan. Though Bikanēr, secluded in the desert, could never become one of the great centres of inspiration of Indian art, she developed at least an important local variety of Rājput art and, what today is much more important to us, she has, thanks to her remoteness, preserved the artistic monuments of her Golden Age almost without loss or damage.

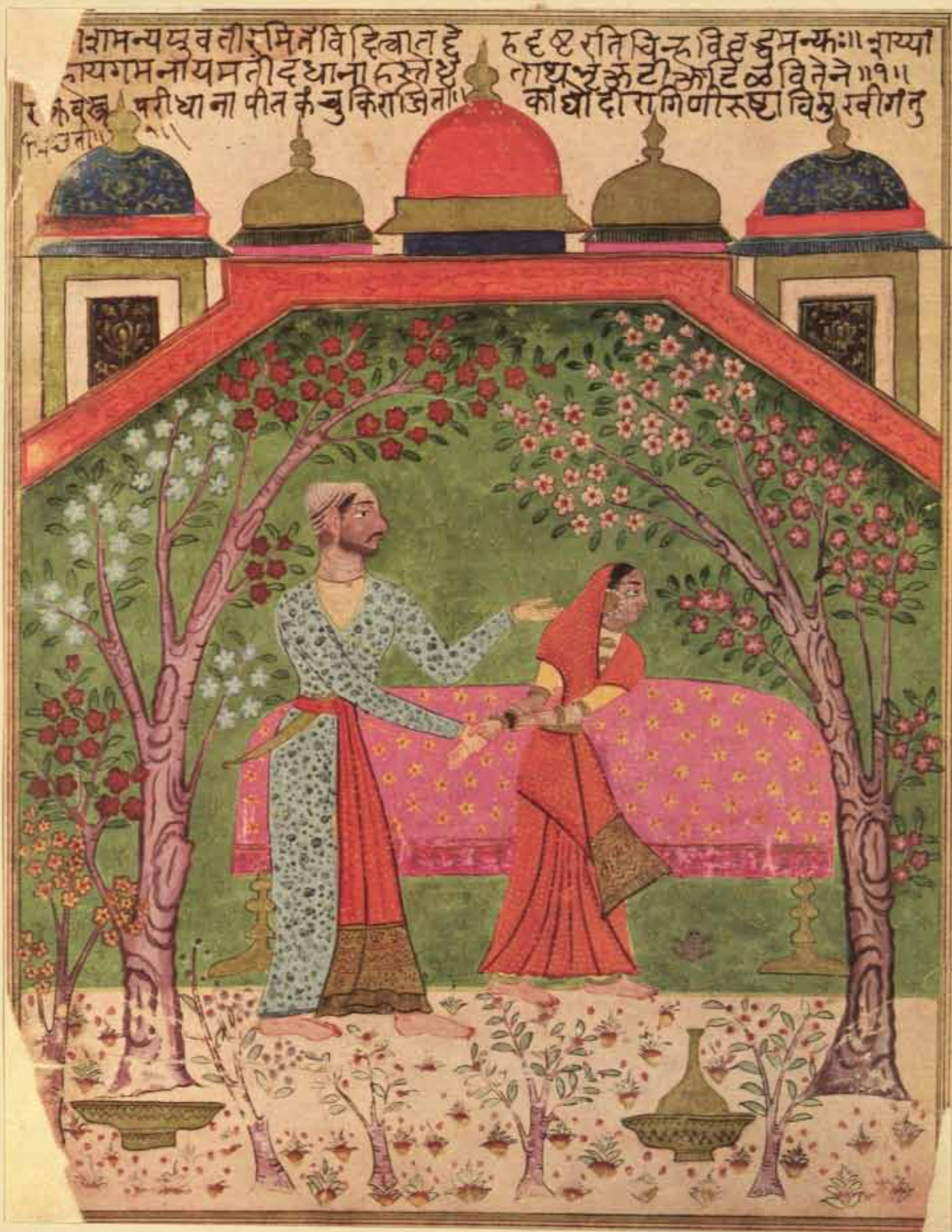
## 2. *The Rājputs and Their Role in Indian Civilization*

Bikanēr is a Rājput state and, in spite of so many influences received from outside, Bikanēr civilization and art are thoroughly Rājput. Col. James Tod,<sup>1</sup> the first and still the best historian of the Rājputs,

<sup>1</sup> 222, I, p. 68 ff.

(These figures refer to the Bibliography p. 132.)





## KAMOD RAGINI

Deccani Miniature, Ahmadnagar, ca. 1565-69. From Rāi Singhji's booty as governor of Burhāndpur, 1585-92.  
 Lallgarh Palace, Bikanēr.





## INTRODUCTION

and A. K. Coomaraswamy,<sup>1</sup> the discoverer of Rājput art, have stressed the peculiar character of Rājput civilization, Hindu and yet markedly different from the rest of Hindu tradition. The Rājputs are kshatriyas—warriors—claiming descent from the heroes whose lives and struggles are described in the great epics, the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana. They were the great bulwark against the advance of the Muslims. They repelled the first invasions of the Arab caliphate of the 'Abbāsids, and were defeated, but not crushed, by the Turkish conquerors of the 12th to the 14th century. They emerged again, in the late 15th century, the obstinate opponents and then loyal allies of the Mughal emperors. Finally, they became again rulers in their own right and their soldiers were among the finest in the British Indian Army.

Rājput society has been and still is feudal. Rājput civilization, like that of Europe in the 11th to the 15th century, centres round the ideals of knightly honour, adventure and romance. The Rājput enjoys life, but has little of the sensuousness of the genuine Hindu; he despises life, but Hindu asceticism makes no appeal to him; he is a mystic, but does not employ the intricate abstractions of Hindu philosophy. Life is an adventure of war and conquest, be it as an independent outlaw or as a ruler defending the law of dharma. It is a life where romantic love and personal loyalty often enough overruled social convention, but these personal decisions were sanctified by the voluntary death of the hero in an, often hopeless, fight and of the woman, as sati, on the funeral pyre. It is a life where religion mirrored those same strong passions in the dark mysteries of the Great Goddess, and in the mystic love of Rādhā and Krishna and of their heavenly milkmaids. As always and everywhere in this world, those ideals often enough did not hold good before the realities of Rājput life. Aristocratic pride degenerated into snobbery and oppression; bravery into drug-addiction and mad recklessness; life jealous of independence into highway robbery and disloyalty; ambition and adventure into treachery and unscrupulousness; aristocratic wedlock into polygamy, concubinage and zenāna seclusion; mysticism into lyric aestheticism. But wherever Rājputs were tried by adversity, those ideals have inspired their supreme decisions and atoned for many sins and vices. Weak in their recklessness and disunion, the Rājputs proved nevertheless invincible because of that same pride and sense of honour unto death.

Likewise Rājput art<sup>2</sup> differs from Hindu art. Where unaffected by other art styles, it lacks the sophistication and over-elaboration, the sensuous modelling and the abstraction of Hindu art. Instead, it is simple, flat, with an intense rhythm of line and of composition, and an emotional romanticism. Even where Rājput art imitates other styles, such as in the high Mediaeval temples, or in its semi-Mughal phase during the 18th and early 19th centuries, it differs from them by a tendency towards those indigenous ideals.<sup>3</sup>

Hindu civilization sprung from the Āryan colonization of India. The semi-Nomadic Āryan tribes, who during the second millennium B.C. had invaded the Panjāb, had about the turn of the first millennium become a military and priestly upper-class in the Ganges plains. But in the course of the tolerant and rather democratic period of Buddhist religious predominance, these conqueror castes more and more intermingled with the indigenous population of dark-skinned agriculturists. From this intercourse Hindu civilization proper developed since the Śunga period (2nd century B.C.), reaching its classic perfection during the Gupta Empire (4th-6th century). But other Āryan tribes had been left behind in the Panjāb, in the mountains of Eastern Afghānistān and in the upper Oxus (Amū Daryā) Valley. They had no share in the growth of Hindu civilization but retained their old tribal customs and their cults of local Devas, whom the Zoroastrian reform rejected as Divs (demons, devils) and the Buddhists identified with the popular godlings of the Ganges plains, the yakshas and yakshinis.<sup>4</sup> Like the later Rājputs, they regarded themselves as warriors (kshatriyas) and had the same ideals of honour and self-sacrifice (jauhar). Their chief gods who resembled Śiva and Krishna, were identified by the Greek invaders with Dionysos and Heracles. The cult of Krishna developed amongst the Western Indian tribes. When the Maurya Empire annexed the Seleucid provinces of Afghānistān, Buddhism became influential, but chiefly amongst the trading middle classes. With successive conquests by Greek,

<sup>1</sup> 49.    <sup>2</sup> 85.    <sup>3</sup> 127. Cp. also 85.    <sup>4</sup> 168; 95; 101



Parthian, Scythian, Kushān and Sāsānian invaders, Irānian settlements and Irānian cultural influence became stronger and stronger. But this Irāno-Buddhist civilization never was more than a thin veneer over the older indigenous traditions. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuan Tsang who in the 7th century soon after the Hūn invasions travelled through those hills, found everywhere kshatriya rulers and the cult of "Devas"<sup>1</sup> by the side of depopulated or destroyed Buddhist monasteries.

But these successive nomadic invasions had already torn serious gaps in the Indian population of the mountains. Like other nomadic invaders, the Scythians, Kushānas and Hūns dragged in their train numerous tribes of other ethnic origin. The Hūns, especially, coming from distant China and already in Turkistān divided into two groups, can have formed hardly more than a small band commanding other, Irānian and Indian-frontier tribes. The same must have been true of the Gurjaras, who were probably Irānians adoring the sun-god (Sūrya), whatever their original relations with the Turkish Khazars may have been.<sup>2</sup> Towards the end of the 6th century the Central-Asian Turks already occupied the whole, once Indian, area north of the Hindukush,<sup>3</sup> and not long afterwards (663) the Muslims began to press from the South on Afghānistān, until, between circa 953 and 1021, the Rājputs<sup>4</sup> of the Śāhī kingdom were at last ousted from their homelands west of the Indus. Their last, long forgotten remnants (there) are the Kafirs, who still inhabit some of the most inaccessible valleys of the highest Hindu-kush.

All these Indian, half-Indian and Irānian frontier tribes were thrown on the half-barbarian tribes of the Panjāb and of the Northwest Indian Desert. And for several hundred years chaos reigned where tribe after tribe expelled, assimilated or exterminated its weaker neighbours in periodical bids for power and living space. The Hūns, probably the only genuine foreigners in this host, ended as mercenaries or were absorbed into some Rājput clans and other castes (e.g. the Rabāris and Bhojaks).<sup>5</sup> The Gurjaras were Irānians, as their Scythian names<sup>6</sup> and their sun (Mithra-Sūrya) cult<sup>7</sup> prove, but their rulers, the Pratihāras, claimed brahman origin<sup>8</sup>; in any case they were soon completely Indianized, and the Sūrya cult absorbed into that of Lakshmi-Nārāyan. Several other clans, the Chohāns (Cāhamānas), Pawārs (Paramāras), Kachwāhas (Kacchāpaghātas) and Solankīs (Caulukyās) had, like the Parihārs (Pratihāras) been subjected to a special purification ceremony at Mt. Ābu<sup>9</sup> before they were acknowledged as genuine kshatriyas by the orthodox brahmins. But although Hindu orthodoxy had then, in the 8th century, been badly threatened by the invasions of the Arabs from Sind, this apocryphal, yet generally accepted tradition proves only that the culture of these tribes had been considerably affected by Sāsānian influence, which had been very strong even in the Gupta Empire. West of the Indus this influence had, of course, been much stronger, as the Bāmiyān ruins<sup>10</sup> and the Kūshāno-Sāsānian coins<sup>11</sup> prove. Sāsānian coins were used in Rājputāna until about 1100<sup>12</sup> and other Sāsānian elements can in fact be traced even much later in Rājput folk art. Other elements of Central Asian origin must be a heritage of the tribes who had come from beyond the Afghān mountains. The Bhattīs, who also came from Afghānistān (Zabūlistān), crossed the Indus only after those doubts had been settled, whereas other Rājput tribes were converted to Islām,<sup>13</sup> before the question really came up at all. Other clans, however, had immigrated earlier or had always lived in the country east of the Indus. The Mohilas are a frag-

<sup>1</sup> 26. <sup>2</sup> Cp. the relationship between the Mughals of India, of mixed Turkish-Rājput-Persian blood and their Mongol "ancestors."

<sup>3</sup> 17. <sup>4</sup> 224, I, p. 190 ff.; Al-Masūdī calls the inhabitants of Afghānistān in the 10th century Rājputs. <sup>5</sup> 59.

<sup>6</sup> 29; Grierson, 102, regards the Gurjaras as Irānians. Sanikalia, 185, comes to the same result.

<sup>7</sup> Most Sūrya temples or images belong to or go back to the Pratihāra period. The Chambā image is half-Sāsānian like that of Khairkhāna, cp. 107 and also 199. <sup>8</sup> 204. Cp. also 174 (with bibliography).

<sup>9</sup> This story is found in the late version of the Prithvirāja Rāso (224, II, p. 12 f.; 205), but the very fact that it records an unfavourable tradition speaks in favour of its genuineness. However, the story was misinterpreted as evidence of the foreign origin of part of the Rājput clans; it reveals only a lack of orthodoxy and a strain of foreign cultural influence for which there exists ample archaeological evidence.

<sup>10</sup> 105; 81; 106; 107; 104; 180, etc.

<sup>11</sup> 114; however Whitehead, 238; 223. See also 216. For Sāsānian influence in the Gupta Empire, see 4.

<sup>12</sup> In the older so-called "Gadhāiyā" coins and related types (Kashmīr, Samanta Deva, etc.) the Sāsānian model still is in evidence, in the later ones only a few dots remain.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. the Sammas, Sūmras, Bārahas, Umars, etc., cp. 54, p. 1 ff.; 224; 174, I, p. 31 f., p. 39.



## INTRODUCTION

ment of the Malloi, who in the Lower Panjāb had fought with Alexander the Great and had later emigrated to Mālwa.<sup>1</sup> The Abhīras (Ahīrs)<sup>2</sup> had come from Sind<sup>3</sup> and founded a shortlived empire in the time preceding the Scythian invasions (second to third centuries); though later not acknowledged as kshatriyas, they bequeathed the Krishna Govinda cult of Mathurā to the Rājputs. The Minas are the old Matsyas of the Mohenjo-Daro and Mahābhārata periods. The Johiyās (Yaudheyas) had been neighbours of the Malloi in the Southern Panjāb probably already in Alexander's time.<sup>4</sup> And the Rāthors (Rāshtrakūtas) had probably come from the Deccan, whereas the origin of many other tribes is still shrouded in darkness.

Whether they had been natives of the Northwest Indian desert, of the Panjāb or of the Indo-Afghān mountains, or stray Irānian immigrants, all these clans soon adopted a more or less uniform mode of life, as a result of common surroundings, social contact, intermarriage, and community of ideals and political bonds. They had, almost all, a similar ethnic background, free from that dark racial strain which distinguishes the Hindu from his "Āryan" ancestors, but also free from the refined cultural heritage of Hinduism. They were barbarians and may be compared with the present tribes of the North West Frontier. They accepted Hindu civilization as the Teutonic tribes of the European migration period accepted Roman culture. But, like them, they reinterpreted it in a new and different spirit. And this process was intensified by the Muslim invasions. These not only shattered Hindu civilization and retarded the development of Rājput culture for another two centuries, but also freed it from traditional bonds. The civilization which evolved after the 14th century was a conscious humanistic renaissance, and in the end proved to be not a revival or imitation of classic Hindu tradition but a new creation, inspired by Hindu classicism in the same manner as the Italian Renaissance had been influenced by Greco-Roman Antiquity. And this youthful and independent civilization, an echo of the Middle Ages, of knights and troubadours, of feudal romance and mystic enthusiasm, has survived into the present where it is being supplanted by the new Eastern capitalism and individualism.

<sup>1</sup> 56; 9; 196.

<sup>2</sup> 201. 182.

<sup>3</sup> Invasions of Junaid ca. 725 beaten off by Bappa Guhilot and of Tamīn 756 repelled by Nāgabhatta I Pratihāra.

<sup>4</sup> 56, p. 281 ff.





## II. THE EARLY POLITICAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF BĪKĀNĒR

### 1. *The Yaudheyas*

Before the foundation of Bīkānēr state in 1465 very little is known of the history of what was then a no-man's land. Only its northern corner forms an exception. For here the desert is crossed by the beds of various Panjāb rivers, the Sotar, the Chitang, the Ghaggar, the Dalwalī Naiwal and Naiwal, which in Bīkānēr and Bahāwalpur territory converge into the Hakra, which again falls into the Nainī and East Nara (Great Mihrān) branches of the Indus and at last disappears in the sands of the Southern Thar desert. Though these rivers have dried up in the Panjāb, they are occasionally flooded in the monsoon season and the underground reserves of water support a richer vegetation and large herds of antelope and black buck. Previously, when North Western India was not as desiccated as at present, they must have been covered with reed swamps. These riverbeds form an excellent direct communication line—from the middle Indus to the Eastern Panjāb and especially to Delhi—which was frequently used by armies even during the early centuries of Muslim rule in India. Moreover these shallow valleys attracted cattle breeding nomads since the remotest times.

All along their borders traces of human settlements are found. These were first explored by Dr. L. Tessitori in 1917 to 1919,<sup>1</sup> and in 1946 by the present writer, whereas Sir Aurel Stein studied those in Bahāwalpur territory in 1941.<sup>2</sup> Most of these settlements are low mounds (Therī), often of considerable extension; some are now covered with sand dunes. Tessitori regarded them as Buddhist funeral places of the ancient Yaudheya tribe, the ancestors of the modern Johiyā Rājputs (Muslims), as no vestiges of walls could be discovered but funeral jars still containing human bones were found. But the very size of these mounds and the masses of ceramic sherds make such an interpretation difficult to accept. As the various types of pottery reveal, the mounds belong to many different periods. Some, in the desert, must have been occupied almost as early as the period of the Indus civilization (3rd millennium B.C.). Others yield fragments of the Greek, Indo-Scythian, Gupta and Muslim periods. It seems much more probable that they are the last remnants of crude mud houses and forts such as are constructed in this part of India up to the present day. When abandoned or destroyed, they slowly disintegrated into these mounds, a process which can be observed even now in the ruins of Hanumāngarh (Bhatner).

Jar burials under houses were common throughout the area of "Chalcolithic" river civilizations, from Harappā in the Panjāb and Mohenjō-Daro<sup>3</sup> on the Indus to prehistoric Baluchistān, ancient Elam and the earliest layers of Sumerian culture in lower Iraq. It is a great pity that so far all trial excavations on these mounds have not been able to establish a reliable chronology<sup>4</sup> of finds, so that all our conclusions must be based on comparisons with better dated finds from other places. However, the oldest fragments of dark-red pottery painted with black designs are—like the small chert knives—very similar to those discovered at Mohenjō-Daro, Harappā and other sites of the Indus Valley civilization. They represent not the same, but a later type developed from the Mohenjō-Daro canon. But as the forms of this pottery reveal a slow and uninterrupted transition to the styles of the Indo-Greek and finally Gupta periods, the question may be raised whether the Indus valley tradition survived in these desert valleys for quite a time after Mohenjō-Daro, Harappā and other old towns had already been overrun by the Āryan invaders.

<sup>1</sup> 11 for 1917-18, p. 21 ff., 1918-19, p. 22 f., cp. also 215.

<sup>2</sup> Material still unpublished. However, Sir Aurel Stein's notes and funds were made accessible to me thanks to the kind cooperation of the Archaeological Survey of India.

<sup>3</sup> 135; 143.

<sup>4</sup> Even Sir Aurel Stein's trial excavations had proved a failure in this respect.



The pottery of the subsequent periods reveals an increasing sureness and elegance of drawing, depicting especially the flora and fauna of these river swamps, reed and lotus, ducks, geese, etc. Some floral motifs even remind one of Greek palmettes (fig. 74). Later the painted ornament is again reduced to simple motifs, but the technique becomes richer. Crimson red lines alternate with black ones and a white engobe is used for certain pieces (Indo-Greek period ?); and, in the last phase, even white outlines and fillings turn up occasionally. The painted decoration is now combined with plastic ornament, impressed with the thumb, sticks, dry reed blades, etc. Then appears slip decoration in bands, in which spirited zigzag and scroll ornaments are scratched. Finally, moulded ornaments are found, stars and rosettes, hanging lotus buds and even figures of the Nude Mother goddess of a Partho-Babylonian type holding up her breasts. The forms of the vessels develop along with the ornament. They become more varied. Bosses for suspension strings, rims of many types, handles and spouts are added; chamfered surfaces become common; beakers, oil lamps, dishes, flat bottles, heaters, etc. are found. And in the last stage, which was probably contemporaneous with the Gupta period, all these techniques are found side by side in the greatest variety.

This luxurious pottery implies a prosperous and settled community. Burnt bricks, decorated with carved or moulded band ornaments and trellis work are found occasionally along the Ghaggar Valley from Hanumāngarh to Bahāwalpur and belong to the same period. Very interesting reliefs and even statues of red burnt clay were detached by Dr. Tessitori from house walls in the villages of Badopal and Rangmahal, but must originally have come from the neighbouring Theris. They are now exhibited in the Bikanēr Museum.

Dr. Tessitori considered these terracotta sculptures<sup>1</sup> to be an offshoot of the Buddhist art of Gandhāra. It is true that some of these reliefs (fig. 1) represent scenes similar to those on the Buddhist railings of Mathurā—women at their toilet, in conversation, or at play. On one relief a “goddess” seems to hold a “cornucopia,” like Ardoksho and the Yakshi Hārītī of Gandhāra art, but it may equally well represent a woman devotee on her way to the temple with a bowl of offerings. Likewise the ladies’ headdresses bear some resemblance to Gandhāran, or even Palmyrene types. Nevertheless, the style of the reliefs comes much nearer to the Mathurā than to the Gandhāra school. Not a single subject can be said to be particularly Buddhist; on the contrary, many scenes are taken from the already fully developed Hindi mythology. Some are Śaivite, such as the Umā-Maheśvara group (fig. 4 with flying gana, the bull Nandi, and Umā in Hellenistic costume), a Linga surrounded by Chaurī bearers (fig. 6) and an elephant headed figure, which probably represents Ganeśa. Others belong to the myth cycle of Krishna-Gopāla, the lifting of Mount Govardhana (fig. 5), and Krishna, asking his tribute from a milkmaid (Dāna-Lilā fig. 3). Both groups are very interesting. For it is in the early Gupta period that the Krishna-Gopāla myth first appears in the art of Mathurā,<sup>2</sup> introduced by the Abhīra nomads. Here his cult is found in the very heart of the nomads’ country, the Ghaggar Valley.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand the linga of Śiva was venerated mainly in the South, though a number of early lingas can be traced also in Northern India,<sup>4</sup> but none so far to the West as the above mentioned unique terracotta relief.

Recent excavations at Ahichhatra-Rāmgarh have brought to light late Gupta terracotta reliefs of similar style and size, together with life-size statues, such as the fragment (fig. 2) found at Pīr Sultān in the Ghaggar Valley. Also, the terracotta sculptures from Rangmahal and Badopal must have belonged to Hindu temples, of which, unfortunately, all direct vestiges have disappeared. Local tradition says that their bricks were removed for the construction of Bhatner (Hanumāngarh) Fort. The oldest temple may have been erected shortly after the fall of the Kushān Empire (circa 200), with the help of artists from the Eastern Panjāb; for the reliefs in the Mathurā style (“Goddesses,” Donors, etc.) cannot be

<sup>1</sup> 31, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> Greek references cp. 42, I, p. 167, p. 408 f., p. 526.—233; 52, fig. 102; Deogath, 4a; Bharat Kalā Bhavan, Benares, 28a; Bādāmi, 21a. The “Rādhākrishna” group from Pahārpur (11 for 1926-27, pl. 32c; 63, pl. 27c) belongs already to the end of the Gupta period and is dubious. So far we know nothing of any so early representations of Rādhā, and it seems more advisable to interpret the group as a mere Mithuna.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. the parallel Krishna stela at Mandor, 28a; also Tumain, C.I.

<sup>4</sup> 52, fig. 68; 21; Maniyār Math at Rājgir has also been interpreted as a linga.



later than the 3rd century. The temple or temples from which come the reliefs with mythological subjects, on the other hand, must have been built or reconstructed in the early 5th century and were possibly connected with a Gupta military and trade post.<sup>1</sup> For the place occupies an important strategic position, at the junction of the Ghaggar and Chittang valleys, like the present day fort and town of Suratgarh, five miles to the West. It seems that this Gupta post was connected with the Panjāb by a chain of other posts along the Ghaggar Valley, for at Pīr Sultān, Kalibanga and Mundā, near Hanu-māngarh, and at Bhadrakālī Theri, beyond that latter town, Dr. Tessitori<sup>2</sup> found vestiges of other buildings of considerable size which he believed to have been stūpas : though here, too, nothing specifically Buddhist was unearthed.<sup>3</sup>

Who originally inhabited the country around these dry river beds, we do not know. The continuity of tradition evident in the decoration of the potsherds makes it appear probable that for quite a time it was a place of refuge to tribes once under the influence of the Indus civilization. But as early as in the Vedic period the country must have been overrun by the Āryan conquerors. For the Sarasvati had been one of their most holy rivers, along which Brahnavarta extended to Kurukshetra. A very old tank at Kolāyat, 25 m. south west of Bikānēr, which from a very early period must have formed an oasis for travellers across the desert, is connected with the memory of the great saint Kapila Muni (Dhūnīnāth), and Dronpur, near the present Sujāngarh, at the south eastern corner of Bikānēr state, had, according to the local tradition, been founded in his old age by Drona, the Brāhman teacher of the Pāndavas, the great heroes of the Mahābhārata.<sup>4</sup> Whatever these legends may be worth in the eyes of the critical historian, they prove at least the great antiquity of these settlements.

The first genuine historical information is provided by the Sanskrit grammarian Pānini (4th century B.C.), who mentions the Yaudheyas as inhabitants of the Southern Panjāb. The territory occupied by them must have been very vast, for General A. Cunningham<sup>5</sup> believes them to be identical with the Ossadii who, as Arrian reports, offered their allegiance to Alexander the Great at the confluence of the Panjāb rivers (Ossadii=Greek Assodioi=Sanskrit Āyudhiyas, synonymous with Yaudheyas). Probably the Abastani, defeated by Alexander's general Perdikkas, were also a group of the same tribe, whose name the Greek interpreters misspelled in a different way. According to Diodorus, Curtius and Croisus, this powerful nation which could put into the field a force of 60,000 foot, 6,000 horse and 500 chariots was called Sabracae, Sambracae or Sambagrae. Cunningham identifies these names with Samvāgri, "Federated Warriors," observing that Northern Bikānēr State had once been called Bāgardeśa, the country of the Bāgri, and that Bāgri is still a common appellation for the present Johiyās and Bhattīs of the western desert. As Pānini mentions the Saubhreyas (Sabracae) by the side of the Yaudheyas, it seems, however, probable that the latter formed merely one group among the "Federated Warriors."

Thanks to their position beyond the Hyphasis (Beas and lower Sutlej) the Yaudheyas were not further affected by Alexander's campaigns. The Malloi (Mālavas, Mohilas)<sup>6</sup> and Oxydrakoi (Kshudrakas) between the Sutlej and Chenāb were not so fortunate and their towns were sacked and inhabitants massacred by the Macedonians. During the successive Graeco-Bactrian, Parthian and Scythian (Śaka) invasions they were at last forced into the Thar desert, south of the Yaudheyas. The Mohila settlements round Sujāngarh are probably the last remnant of the Mālavas in Bikānēr and Jaipur territory, before they proceeded further to the South East and finally settled in Mālva. The advance of the Mālavas, however, pressed the Yaudheyas and their eastern neighbours, the Arjunāyanas, towards the north ; and, when at the beginning of the Christian era Śaka rule disintegrated, they occupied the whole

<sup>1</sup> Under Samudragupta and Rāmagupta the frontier of the Gupta Empire may have been along the Sutlej line, Chandragupta II expanded the empire up to Afghānistān, but probably already under Kumāragupta I it fell back to the East Panjāb. Cp. 57 and 165. For the Gupta brick temple cp. 229; in Bahāwalpur 226a. <sup>2</sup> 11 for 1918-19, p. 22 ff.

<sup>3</sup> In Sind, however, ruins of indubitable stūpas with a very similar brick relief decoration have been discovered at Mīrpur Khāss (54, p. 82 ff., pls. 19-27; 11 for 1909-10, p. 80 ff.), Thūl Mīr Rukān (54, p. 98 ff., pl. 29), Sudheran (54, p. 100, pl. 31) and Depār Ghāngro near Mansūra-Brāhmanābād (54, p. 59, p. 11b).

<sup>4</sup> 164, p. 6 f.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 23 note 4.

<sup>6</sup> See p. 23 note i.



eastern Panjāb.<sup>1</sup> However, about the year 80 they had to submit to the successors of the Śakas, the Kushānas, whose emperor Kanishka has become so famous as the patron of Mahāyāna Buddhism. After the death of Huvishka, the Yaudheyas, the Mālavas and the Kunindas who inhabited the valleys of the Panjāb Himālaya, revolted against the Kushānas (about the year 145), but were crushed by the Mahākshatrpa Rudradāman I of Western India (Junāgadh inscription in the year 150). Half a century later they again rose against Kanishka III and expelled the Kushānas from the Eastern Panjāb.

According to the Allahābād pillar inscription of Samudragupta<sup>2</sup> (circa 335-385), the Yaudheyas became at last vassals of the Gupta Empire, but the yoke, comparable to contemporary Roman control over the Arab kingdoms of Petra and Palmyra, seems to have been light, and the Yaudheyas must have profited from the advantages of intercourse with the refined Gupta civilisation. And to these two and a half centuries of peace and prosperity (circa 200-450) we may ascribe the architectural and sculptural monuments and the best pottery discovered in the Ghaggar Valley.

## 2. *The Time of Chaos*

Gupta civilisation, even at its peak, showed signs of coming disintegration. Kumāragupta died about the year 455 in flight, probably before the Pushyamitras, a tribe possibly connected with the Hūnas, which seems to have tried to overthrow the imperial house. Whether the Hūns<sup>3</sup> who only some years later (484) defeated the Sāsānian king, Pērōz, came as allies of the rebels, or whether they had used the unexpected opportunity offered by this war, we cannot ascertain. As frontier feudatories the Yaudheyas must have had to bear the brunt of the Hūn attack and, though no chronicle mentions their fate, the vestiges of incendiarism in the Ghaggar Valley tell the same tale as at Taxila and other ruined sites. After fierce battles, Skandagupta (circa 455-470) succeeded in restoring the empire, but after his death it broke up irrevocably. The Hūns returned and swept over the whole of North-Western India, until they were defeated by Balāditya and Yasodharman in the year 527. It seems from what we know of their movements that the Yaudheya country suffered severely from the invasion. When the Hūns left, the Gurjaras took their place. The Yaudheyas survived the attacks of these as of later rivals, but they were decimated, lost their prominent position and, since their conversion to Islām, are now not even fully acknowledged by the other Rājputs.

The Gurjaras first settled in the Panjāb,<sup>4</sup> round Gujrat and Gujranwāla, then moved to Northern Bikānēr and at last settled in Mārwar where they founded the Pratihāra dynasty, which, first from Mandor, then from Kanauj, was to rule over most of Northern and Central India. Their place was taken by the Cāhamānas (Chauhāns),<sup>5</sup> who in the 8th century occupied Bikānēr, the South Eastern Panjāb, the region round the Sāmbhar Lake and even parts of Mallāni (Western Mārwar). An echo of those barbarian times has come down to us in the Saga of Gūgā,<sup>6</sup> the great Chauhān hero, and of his nephew rājā Mandalik of Barmer.<sup>7</sup> This saga is connected chiefly with Dadrewa (Dadarewo), a village in the Rājgarh Tahsil of Eastern Bikānēr State, where every year in August a great fair is held in his honour, and where in fact the memorial stone of the local rana of the late 12th century, Jevara (Jayata Siha), has been found.<sup>8</sup> Tradition regards the latter as Gūgā's father, and Gūgā himself as one of the heroes of the battle of Tarāin, where the Rājput coalition under Prithvī Rāj III of Delhi was defeated so disastrously by Muhammad Ghori in 1192. However, even this tradition is confused, combining events which must refer to several Chauhān rebels against the Muslims, from the reign of Aibak to that of Firōz Shāh. Moreover the Gūgā Saga reports very little of historical events, but is mainly concerned with a host of miracles ascribed partly to the hero himself, his reappearance after death, his power over snakes

<sup>1</sup> 10; 163; 167; 215.

<sup>2</sup> 57, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> 57; 176; 17.

<sup>4</sup> 102; 185. The literature on the Imperial Pratihāras is so numerous that it cannot be cited here. Cp. also 206.

<sup>5</sup> 174, vol. II, p. 152 ff. Cp. Indian Antiquary 41, p. 17 ff.

<sup>6</sup> 235, p. 69 f.; 115, p. 179 f.; 38; 149; 159; 56a; 212.

<sup>7</sup> Vogel, 230; has connected him with the Mandalik rājās Chūdāsamās of Kāthiāwār; but the version in 235, p. 50 is more plausible.

<sup>8</sup> 220 for 1917.



and his birth from a fruit eaten by his mother Vāchal, and partly to the saint Gorakhnāth, founder of the Kānpata yogīs, a rather mysterious figure who must have lived much earlier, in the 8th century. As the name Gūgā appears already in the 7th century, it is obvious that the godling Gūgā, the protector against snake bites whose shrines are found all over Rājputānā, the Panjāb, the Himālaya and Central India, is a much older figure, probably a tribal god of the invading Gurjara and other frontier barbarians whose myth later on became part of the saga of the historical Chauhān hero Gūgā of Dadrewa and his successors.

Like the Gurjara-Pratihāras before them, the Cāhamānas also settled in the more promising country east of the Thar desert and founded the prosperous kingdom of Śākambharī (Sāmbhar) (late 10th century) and Ājmer (late 11th century). They expelled the Tomār Rājputs from Delhi (late 12th century) and were thinking of overthrowing the Gaharwārs, the successors of the Rāthors, after the Pratihāras on the imperial throne of Kanauj (since the late 11th century), when the storm of the Muslim invasion under Muhammad Ghori shattered all further ambitions. Behind the Cāhamānas, however, the Bhattīs were advancing into the Thar Desert. Under Muslim pressure they had first emigrated from Southern Afghānistān to the region along the middle course of the Indus,<sup>1</sup> then were forced by the Arab general, Junaid, into the Thar Desert, where they were defeated by the Partihāra king Śiluka in the year 837.<sup>2</sup> But having succeeded in crushing the Paramāras, they founded the kingdom of Derāwar, the capital of which was later shifted to Lodorva and finally to Jaisalmer. This kingdom, however, was much larger than the present Jaisalmer State and extended from Bhātner and Bhātinda in the Panjāb almost to the Runn of Cutch.

Between these ruling Rājput clans many smaller ethnic groups were squeezed—subject peoples like the Jats, Mers,<sup>3</sup> Minas<sup>4</sup> and Gūjars or Eastern Bikānēr State, or half-independent like the Yaudheya-Johiyās round Bhatner and Sirsa, the Mālava-Mohilas of Chāpara-Dronpur, the Parihārs, the Sānkhlās of Janglū and the Sūrānās of Morkhāna.<sup>5</sup> These latter were minor branches of the Paramāra clan, like the Dahiyās of Phalodi<sup>6</sup> or Sānkhlās of Kirātakūpa<sup>7</sup> = Kiradu (exterminated by the Chauhān of Barmer who in their turn were superseded by the Rāthors).<sup>8</sup> The main branch—of Mt. Ābu—had conquered Mālva (early 9th century) and perished with the gigantic but shortlived empire of Bhoja of Dhār (early 11th century).<sup>9</sup> Thus the present ethnic picture of Bikānēr State was formed in the dark centuries of the North-west Indian Middle Ages.

### 3. *The Trade Routes of the Thar Desert*

Of the cultural life of this period, however, we know hardly anything. Whereas in Eastern Rājputānā a refined and aristocratic culture, supported by an esoteric form of orthodox Hinduism, had flourished since the 8th century, life in the Thar Desert, until the founding of Bikānēr State, seems to have remained at that semi-nomadic level which even to-day is found outside the great towns and communication lines, and comprises wells, thorny enclosures for the cattle, mud villages, some primitive sanctuaries, vermilion-painted stones (Bhaironji<sup>10</sup>) under an acacia, and some simple house industries—a pottery preserving a poor echo of the rich old Yaudheya ceramics, or cross-stitch embroideries, rather un-Indian and reminiscent of the similar folk art of the Balkans and Southern Russia. Whatever higher civilization existed, centred round the mud forts and walled enclosures of the local chiefs, ranas and thakurs.

Of course, Hindu traders and missionaries soon began to penetrate this barbarian world. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang has left us a description of the centre O-ch'a-li<sup>11</sup> (Uchh in Bahāwalpur, or

<sup>1</sup> 66, II, p. 439 f., III, p. 272, IV, p. 170; 118, XIV, 1908; 235, p. 84 f. <sup>2</sup> 130.

<sup>3</sup> By some scholars the Mers are regarded as a remnant of the Hūns, by others as identical with the Maitrakas who, however, must have been Irānians. Also the Jāts are suspected of foreign origin, cp. 29 and 222.

<sup>4</sup> 182.

<sup>5</sup> 220 for 1917 p. 202 ff and p. 210.

<sup>6</sup> 220 for 1915, p. 85 f.

<sup>7</sup> 174, II, p. 925 ff.

<sup>8</sup> 235, p. 49 f.

<sup>9</sup> 174, I, p. 140, p. 199; II, p. 43 ff., esp. p. 8861 ff.

<sup>10</sup> 55, which does not exhaust the subject.

<sup>11</sup> 26. But Inamdar, 119, identifies it with Vadali in Gujarāt. General circumstances fit better on the older identification.



Atari, near Mūltān) on the Indus during the early 7th century—irreligious and unscrupulous people only interested in making money, intensive trade, especially in gems, precious stones and perfumes, probably also in wool and grain, much superstition and worship of the "Spirits of Heaven" in innumerable small shrines. Buddhism has not yet died out, and probably there were also Jains amongst the merchants. For even during the Scythian invasions the Jains of Mathurā and Ujjain had been zealous missionaries,<sup>1</sup> and also amongst the newly immigrated Rājputs, Jains, mostly from Vallabhī, made converts, as their often semi-Scythian names, which are found even late in the Middle Ages, and many local legends reveal. Under the Pratihāra Dynasty (8th-10th centuries) important Jain communities sprang up all over Rājputana, at Śrimal, Jālor, Osiā, Chitor, Ārbuda (Mt. Ābu), Pātan-Anhilwāda, etc., and in the time of Udyotana Sūri (early 10th century) all the 84 Gacchas of the Śvetambaras had already come into existence.

The Hindu missionaries also, especially the Kānphata yogis<sup>2</sup> of Gorakhnāth, were active, and in the 8th century had established orthodox Hinduism as the state cult of a very exclusive kshatriya (Rājput) aristocracy. They acknowledged the sun worship of the newcomers, and during the 8th-10th centuries Sūrya temples were built in great number in Northern India, until about the 10th century the sun cult was absorbed into that of Sūrya-Nārāyan, and finally of Lakshmī-Nārāyan. Only a few sun temples, e.g. those of Mūltān, Modherā and Konārka, have survived. But the Sūryavamsī Rājputs are still proud of their descent from the sun, and Lakshmī-Nārāyan remains the state god of almost all Rājput states. It was not until late in the 12th century that the cult of Krishna-Gopāla began to emerge from a long obscurity; it was only after the Muslim invasions and after it had felt the inspiration of the South Indian reforms of Mādhva, Rāmānuja and Rāmānanda, that it became the all-embracing centre of a fervent popular mysticism.

The official state cult of the Pratihāra period was that of Śiva. In practice, however, it was not Śiva, but his Śakti (creative power or "consort," the Great Mother, who won the veneration of the masses, appealing as she did, to older inherited feelings. For the Great Mother had at an early period been venerated in Afghānistān and the Panjāb in her Buddhist form of Hārīti or Irānian form of Anahit-Nanaia,<sup>3</sup> or as a terrible tribal demon by the primitive tribes of Rājputānā, Minas, Bhils, etc. As war goddess she appealed to a warrior race, and as a goddess of death to a people who feared death less than dishonour. The cult of Durgā Mahishamardini (or Chāmundā) is thus the oldest still existing in Rājputānā, though in Bīkānēr proper it was superseded by that of one of her historical incarnations, the Charan prophetess Karnī, or by Jain adaptations like Ambikā or Susānī.

The only contemporary monuments of this period are the Govardhans,<sup>4</sup> (figs. 15, 16) small stone columns in memory of deceased chieftains or local heroes, adorned with four conventional reliefs on top, depicting Śiva, Vishnu, Brahmā and Ganeśa or, in other cases, with the figures of the commemorated persons shown in adoration of a linga. They do not represent a local art, but must have been imported or may be the products of wandering masons from Ajmer. After the 11th century, however, the Govardhans were in Bīkānēr replaced by Devalis, memorial slabs (Paliyas), such as are found wherever Rājputs settled (figs. 13, 14, 17, 19). But these local stelae remained for long the product of a very primitive folk art, and only in the 15th century evolved into Rājput art proper.

Until the second half of the 10th century Jangaladeśa<sup>5</sup> formed a neglected frontier province of the Empire of Kanauj. The later Pratihāra rulers were too weak to bother about such a poor country. The Arab province of Sind had after the decline of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate of Baghdād broken up into several small kingdoms and the Sāhī kings of the Panjāb were preoccupied with their struggles with Kashmīr and the aggressive Turks of Ghaznī. But the situation changed quickly at the end of the 10th century. About the year 973 Vīgrāharājā II Cāhamāna threw off the suzerainty of the

<sup>1</sup> 42, I, p. 150 ff., 23; 150; 185.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. p. 28 note 6; the legends of Gorakhnāth and Gūgā are closely intertwined.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. p. 21 note 4; 96; 16.

<sup>4</sup> See below.

<sup>5</sup> 174, II, maps III and VI.



last Pratihāras, whereas in the West Amīr Sabuktegin four years later founded the kingdom of Ghazni and resumed the aggressive policy of the 'Umayyads and early 'Abbāsids. Thus the Thar Desert, though it became from time to time a theatre of war, remained for the most part a neutral buffer state through which trade between India and the West passed, after communications in the Panjāb had been interrupted by successive full-scale campaigns and endless smaller frontier disputes.

Several old trade routes cross the desert. From Śākambharī (Sāmbhar), the centre of Cāhamāna power, and Ajmer, a Northern route passed via Churū and Nohar (the Kānuvihār of the Chāchnāma<sup>1</sup>) to Sirsa and Bhātinda in the Panjāb. Another, North-North Western road went via Dronpur-Chāpar (near Sujāngarh) to Tārānagar (near Sardārshahr), Pallū (Pahlādakūpa of an inscription of Ārnorājā<sup>2</sup>), Bhatner or the middle Ghaggar Valley and Depālpur. A third, North-Western one, ran via Didwāna, Morkhāna (near Deshnoke), Ajiyapur (Janglū<sup>3</sup>), Kodāmdesar or Kolāyat to Pugal and Mūltān. Other routes further south crossed from Mandor via Osiā and Phalodi to Derāwar, from Ābu, Jālor and Bhinmal to Kiradu (Barmer) and Jaisalmer (founded 1156) or Brahmanābād (Mansūra).

The most frequented of the Northern routes seem to have been those from Ajmer to Depālpur and to Mūltān. The latter especially may have acquired some importance by the late 9th and early 10th centuries, when the famous sun (Āditya) temple of Mūltān<sup>4</sup> attracted many pilgrims, before it was again destroyed by the fanatic Karmatians. Probably Vigrāharājā II had already constructed the great mud fort of Pallū and erected there a Śiva temple, of which only a few sculptures survive. This first fort and shrine were, like Bhatner, destroyed during the great raids of Mahmūd of Ghazni between 1000 and 1025. But the crisis in the Panjāb under Mahmūd's successor Mas'ūd I, the governorship of the Hindu Tilak, and, in the West, the attacks of the Seljuqs, and later the civil war with the Ghorids so weakened the later Yamīnī sultāns that rājā Mahipāla of Delhi was able to retake Kāngrā Fort and besiege Lahore. Thus Bhatner was rebuilt. Prithvirāj I<sup>5</sup> married a Dahiyā girl from Phalodi and founded Nāgaur. Ārnorājā<sup>6</sup> likewise married a princess of Avīci, the desert country. Probably in the 11th century also the Susānī Temple of Morkhāna was constructed as a Śiva shrine.

But then the very decline of the Yamīnī sultanate brought disaster. For Muhammad Bāhalīm,<sup>7</sup> governor of Lahore for sultān Arslān, emigrated after the defeat of the latter by Bahrām Shāh II in 1118 beyond the Thar, restored the mud fort of Nāgaur and tried to build up a kingdom of his own by systematic raids on the surrounding Hindu territories. The next year he was defeated by Bahrām Shāh and perished in a swamp.

After Abū Halīm's death Ārnorājā must have reoccupied Pallū about 1140. A Yamīnī counter-offensive was defeated at Lake Pushkar near Ajmer,<sup>8</sup> in 1170 Prithvirājā II occupied Pancapura (Pākpattan) on the Sutlej, and in 1191 Prithvirāj III even took Bhātinda in the Central Panjāb.<sup>9</sup> To this period belong the remains of several Jain temples at Pallū in the Solankī style. For the great patron of Jainism, Kumārapāla of Pātan-Anahilawāda (1144-73) had expanded the frontiers of the Solankī Empire of Gujārāt as far north as Chitor and Kiradu, and had become the double brother-in-law of Ārnorājā.<sup>10</sup> It is, however, difficult to say whether by that time the Sivālaya of Morkhāna had been reconsecrated as a Jain sanctuary. For the otherwise very fanciful clan legend of the Sūrānā Rājputs (a branch of the Paramāras) whose family deity Susānī (Ambika) became, attributes their conversation to Hemachandra,<sup>11</sup> the contemporary of Kumārapāla. But the dedication inscription of Sonī Devā, 1172, says nothing, and possibly it actually inspired, much later, the melodramatic romance of Susānī. But these Jain settlements survived all later disasters, though Chauhān rule was to collapse only a few years after this last expansion.

<sup>1</sup> 66, I, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> According to Dr. Dasharatha Sharma.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> 220 for 1915, p. 85 ff.; for 1916, p. 202 ff.

<sup>4</sup> 56, p. 266 f.; 115, p. 29 f.; see also 238.

<sup>5</sup> 220 for 1915, p. 85 ff.

<sup>6</sup> 174, II, p. 1072.

<sup>7</sup> (Abū Halīm) 73, vol. I, p. 151 ff.; 77a.

<sup>8</sup> 207.

<sup>9</sup> 174, II, p. 1089.

<sup>10</sup> 174, II, p. 1072 ff.

<sup>11</sup> 220 for 1916, p. 210 ff.



*The Muslim Invasion*

At last the cloud of a Muslim invasion which for several centuries had threatened the Northwest frontier of India, burst. When the last Yaminid, Khusrau Malik, surrendered to Mu'izz-ud dīn Muhammad bin Sām, nephew of Muhammad, the "World Burner," the last buffer standing between the Rājputs and a fierce and fanatic conqueror race, fell.

But the Rājputs seem not to have been aware of the danger. The ravages of the Arab and Ghaznavid invasions had long since been healed. The North Indian kingdoms were rich and flourishing. In valour their armies were a match for the Afghān mountaineers and Turks, and their superiors in numbers and equipment. But they were divided among themselves and internally weak. The Cāhamānas had ousted the Tomāras from Delhi and the Eastern Panjāb, and were trying to set aside the Gaharwār Emperors of Kanauj. And in Gujarāt<sup>1</sup> the Vāghelas had already become the actual regents for Bhīma II, one of the last, weak Solankīs. The authority of the old court aristocracy was shaken. The provincial nobles had become semi-independent and began to cultivate the popular Krishna cult and a local folk art. Warfare had become an aristocratic game with fixed rules, like the wars of the condottieri of the Italian Renaissance. Thus the Rājputs could oppose to the finest soldiers of that age only short-lived alliances and unwieldy, badly disciplined armies.

The people of the inhospitable, barren mountains of Afghānistān have always been barbarian, but are none the less very sturdy and fierce warriors. During those centuries when one nomadic invasion after another from Central Asia overran the Irānian highlands, they were, moreover, exposed to an exceptionally hard struggle for survival. This struggle produced not only extremely tough, mobile and indefatigable soldiers, but also leaders of iron will and unquestioned authority, broad outlook and cool judgment combined with temerity, unscrupulousness and a complete disregard for human life. Their military equipment was much more modern. Before them valorous knights, wealth and splendid cultural achievements collapsed like a house of cards.

In a few years the disaster was complete. In 1190 Muhammad bin Sām was defeated by Prithvī Rāj III, at Tarāin,<sup>2</sup> in the Panjāb. But two years later he crushed on the same battlefield the greatest Rājput coalition. The greatest of all Rājput heroes was killed, and within a few years the kingdoms of the Cāhamānas of Delhi (1192) and Ajmer (1193), of the Gaharwārs of Kanauj (1193), of the Candels in Bundelkhand, and of the Senas of Bengal (1202-03) were wiped out by Muhammad's generals, especially Aibak and Muhammad ibn Bakhtiyār, and those of Gujarāt (1195-97) and Central India (1202, 1225, 1226) shaken. And the effects of this disaster were felt further afield. For as the Rājput and brāhmin aristocracy was not prepared to submit to conquerors antagonistic to all their ideals of life and religion, there began an armed mass migration, in search of new kingdoms, fiefs and temples. The very character of the new Muslim power facilitated such a reshuffling of peoples. For numerically the conquerors were too weak really to control the vast territories. They could merely occupy a few strategic centres and from there smash all possible centres of opposition, plunder treasures once accumulated by generations of mighty rājās or destroy centres of "heathen" religious life.

Thus, whereas the great Hindu kingdoms had disappeared, innumerable petty Rājput and other Hindu principalities sprang up. They led a precarious existence in the shadow of the Muslim conquerors, mainly in the more remote and inaccessible hills or deserts. Old fiefs surviving from the past and new states fought each other. Some were robbers, others tried to consolidate their position, only to be crushed, sooner or later, like Hamīr of Rānthambhor or Ratan Singh of Chitor,<sup>3</sup> by some Muslim expeditionary force. Cultural life did not quite disappear, it persisted at village level. But the arts disappeared, literacy was almost lost, and Hindu religion had become hardly discernible from the concepts of primitive tribes. Nevertheless, no matter how high the price for survival, the germs of

<sup>1</sup> 184; 46; 174, p. 1005 ff.<sup>2</sup> 45.<sup>3</sup> 42, III; 222, I, p. 307 ff.; 125; 188.



Rājput political and cultural life were preserved, in an "underground" rustic existence, in order to rise again and to develop into the present Rājput states and Rājput culture as soon as the general Indian and international situation was to change.

For the early Indo-Muslim political system could not be more than a temporary phenomenon. Nothing is so expensive and destructive as war, and a political system living on war, loot and "colonial" exploitation must sooner or later collapse or return to a normal administration and an accommodation with the conquered peoples. The Muslim military machine had reached its perfection in the reign of A'lā-ud-dīn Khiljī (1296-1316) and had conquered the whole of India, almost as far as Cape Comorin. It cracked at last during the reign of Muhammad Tughluq (1325-1351), genius, scholar and bloody tyrant. The harsh measures used to bolster up the exhausted administration, led to a general revolt and to the formation of provincial Muslim kingdoms. Both the state of Fīrōz Shāh Tughluq (1351-88) and of the Sayyid and Lodī dynasties of Delhi, and the new sultanates of Gujarāt, Mālwa, Jaunpur, Gulbarga (Deccan) and Gaur (Bengal) were based on a real administration of most of their territories, as crownlands or fiefs, and on a real *modus vivendi* with the subject Hindus. But this implied also a clearer definition of frontiers, and the occupation of the no-man's land where the petty Hindu principalities had survived. These were annexed one by one, where they did not unite to form kingdoms strong enough to withstand Muslim expansion. Often defeated, they developed an astonishing tenacity and power of recuperation which permitted them to make good all losses by sheer courage and clever exploitation of inter-Muslim rivalries and wars. The most important of these revived Rājput states were Mewār (Chitor-Udaipur) and Mārwar (Jodhpur). Both seemed for some time very near to the goal of an empire comprising most Rājput states, Chitor under Kumbha Rānā (1433-68) and Sanga (Sangrām, 1508-27), Jodhpur under Rāo Māldeo (1532-62/3). But the age-old curse of hybris was their undoing and led to the growth of other kingdoms, branches of the same families, such as Bīkānēr (Rāthor), Kishangarh (Rāthor) and Dungarpur (Sisodia), or restorations of other former Mediaeval kingdoms, such as Amber-Jaipur (Kachhwāha), Būndi (Hāra) and Sirohi (Chauhān), which with the support of, or in rebellion against the Mughal emperors of the 16th and 17th centuries asserted their own rights and won power and glory.



### III. POLITICAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF BĪKĀNĒR STATE

#### 1. *The Rise of the Rāthors*

The ancestry of the Rāthor dynasty is one of the proudest in India. According to the tradition of the royal bards, Sihāji or Sīyāji, the founder of Jodhpur State, was a grandson of Jaichand, the last Gaharwār emperor, whom the Muslims had killed in the battle of Chandwār in 1193. Like so many other Rājputs, his sons Seoji and Setrām are said to have retired with a small band of loyal followers into the arid hills of Rājputānā and to have settled finally at Pāli, where Setrām's son succeeded in establishing a small principality by ousting the predatory Mer and Mīna tribes. The Gaharwārs are also claimed as a branch of the Rāshtrakūtas, one of the most powerful dynasties (*circa* 753-973) of the Mediaeval Deccan, still commemorated by one of the most famous monuments of Indian architecture, the Kailāsa rock-cut temple of Elūrā. Like so many similar bardic traditions these also have been embellished and oversimplified, but there is no reason to question the general correctness of their background. The memorial stone of "Sihā son of prince Śrī-Seta" has been found at Bithu, 14 miles from Pāli.<sup>1</sup> However, Setrām can only have been a grandson of Jaichand on his mother's side, as Jaichand belonged to the Gaharwār dynasty which had superseded the Rāshtrakūtas of Kanauj (in power since 1020) about 1090, after the latter had in 1086 been overthrown by a Muslim invasion under Mahmūd ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Mas'ūd.<sup>2</sup> Apparently the usurping dynasty had strengthened its position by inter-marriage with the older Rāshtrakūtas, who thus had shared their glory and their downfall. In exile Setrām must have remembered that in Mārwar kinsmen of his had lived as petty chiefs as early as the 10th century.<sup>3</sup> Both branches, the Rāshtrakūtas of Kanauj and those of Mārwar, seem to have come from the Deccan with the Northern expeditions of the emperors of Mānyakheta (Mālkhed), the most splendid of all princes of Mediaeval India.<sup>4</sup> Probably they had been left behind when Indra III (912-917) temporarily had occupied Kanauj, and Amoghavarsha III (935-940) Mārwar and Bundelkhand. When between the years 972 and 980 the Rāshtrakūta Empire collapsed, these families had probably been strengthened by so many refugees that they could form kingdoms of their own in the North. Under these circumstances they were interconnected in the confusing manner so common in a feudal age—witness the Anjous of the Isle-de-France, Provence, Naples, Greece, Hungary and Poland.

That the Deccanī connection of the family was still alive and acknowledged in the 14th century, is proved by the fact that Sihāji's grandson Duharji installed at Nāgāna the image of the old family goddess, Rāshtrasenā, which had been saved from the devastated Karnatik.<sup>5</sup> Duharji indeed had reason to feel confident, for his state was expanding into the Thar Desert where his cousin Pābū had already acquired legendary fame.<sup>6</sup> The saga of Pābū, with its details of gallantry, robberies, cattle-rustling and magic lore, throws much light on the barbarian conditions then prevailing. By the time that Muhammad Tughluq had wasted his last energies in hunting down his rebellious officers, Mallinātha had subjected the whole South Western part of the present state of Mallāni.<sup>7</sup> And just before Tīmūr of Samarkand put an end to Tughluq Shāh's dynasty, Chondāji had acquired the old capital of Mārwar, Mandor,<sup>8</sup> by marriage and had even expelled the Muslims from Nāgaur. But a feud between his son Ranmall (Rinamālo) and the Bhattis allied with Jaisalmer for the hand of the princess Kodāma Devī of Pugal ended in the loss of Nāgaur and the death of Chondā in 1429.<sup>9</sup> Ranmall lost his kingdom and had to flee to Rānā Mokal of Chitor. After a long life of humiliation and daring exploits, which included an unsuccessful

<sup>1</sup> 174, I, 18; 28.

<sup>2</sup> 116; 218; 77; 174, I, p. 504 ff., 550 ff.

<sup>3</sup> 174, I, p. 559 ff.; 42, III, p. 521; 225, p. 222 f.

<sup>4</sup> 8; 227.

<sup>5</sup> 235, p. 26; 31, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> 220 for 1915, p. 106 ff.; 222, I, p. 329; II, p. 843.

<sup>7</sup> 222, II, p. 843, III, p. 1272; 235, p. 49 f.; 18; 3, p. 60.

<sup>8</sup> 222, II, p. 956; 3, p. 60; 18; 42, III, p. 522; cp. also Tessitori for 1915, p. 101 f.

<sup>9</sup> 209 (not 1408-09).



attempt to win the throne of Mewār, he was murdered in 1444.<sup>1</sup> But his son Jodha succeeded in regaining his inheritance with the help of the long-neglected but loyal vassals of the Western marches.<sup>2</sup>

The times were changing again. The Muslim civil war was over. The new sultanates had established themselves, and from all sides the Muslim rulers attacked the rising Rājput kingdoms. Soon after Nāgaūr<sup>3</sup> had been lost by Chondā, a younger brother of Muzaffar I of Gujarāt took it from the Bhattis. In 1426 Mubārak of Delhi plundered Mewār. In 1428 and the following year Ibrāhīm of Jaunpur led expeditions against Gwālior. In 1442 Mahmūd I of Gujarāt invaded Mewār. In the following year Rānā Kūmbha was defeated by Muhammad I of Mālwa, and in 1446 by Mahmūd I. In 1453 Rānā Kūmbha defeated the Gujarātis at Nāgaūr. In 1454 Mahmūd I invaded Hāraoti and Mewār in 1455. At the same time Kūmbha, now the greatest Rājput ruler, threatened the Rāthor territories.<sup>4</sup> Kūmbha had already started a policy of consolidating his state by an extensive system of fortresses.<sup>5</sup> Now Jodha followed his example and in 1459 founded the imposing fort on the steep cliffs overhanging his new capital, Jodhpur.<sup>6</sup>

It was a great time, notwithstanding the many wars. The centuries of struggle had generated a tremendous vitality which now, with growing political consolidation and self-confidence, sought also for cultural expression. Kūmbha, Jodha and their Rājput contemporaries constructed forts in imitation of the progressive Muslim defence systems, palaces combining the style of the Mālwa and Delhi sultāns with richer traditional Hindu and Rājput folk elements, and temples in the orthodox mediaeval style preserved by the salāts of Gujarāt. Manuscripts were illuminated in the Jain palmleaf style, whereas on the memorial stones and in bronze and brass a new popular art tried to find expression. Bardic literature flourished in innumerable ballads, devotional songs in honour of Śrī Krishna were composed even by Rānā Kūmbha,<sup>7</sup> and soon there was to rise the star of Indian mystic poetry, his daughter-in-law, saintly Mīrā Bāi.<sup>8</sup> Sanskrit literature, too, was cultivated for scientific purposes.

## 2. *The Birth of Bikanēr State*<sup>9</sup>

Notwithstanding all these achievements, the individual Rājput states were still very loosely knit. As in Europe during the same period, a strong central administration was still unknown, only the bonds of common ideals, blood and fealty kept the state together. The fiefs were in the hands of sons, brothers and cousins of the ruling house, or of families who voluntarily or under compulsion had sworn allegiance or had been invested for special personal services. Unanimous against the common Muslim foe, they would break up into rival factions and clans, and even transfer their allegiance to another lord. Where a strong ruler was lacking, or where primogeniture and personal qualifications might clash, the whole state threatened to disintegrate.

This happened in Jodhpur on the death of Rāo Jodha.<sup>10</sup> Ranmall's humiliation had weakened the authority of the Rāthor king, and the turbulent nobility split into factions supporting the sons of Jodha's various queens. Rāo Jodha solved these difficulties by encouraging his sons and their friends to carve out new fiefs for themselves from the lands of still independent tribes and small chieftains. This policy

<sup>1</sup> The history of rāo Ranamalla (Rirmalji) is still very controversial; the Mārwar and Mewār versions in 222 contradict one the other (see also II, p. 730 ff.; parallel and interconnected "The Wedding of Sādhu.") Cp. further 42, III, p. 522; 220 for 1916, p. 217; the key of the situation must probably be sought in the conflict with Pūgal and Jaisālmēr under Kailān and later Chāchakdeo, and the subsequent establishment of the Khānwāda dynasty at Nāgaūr. Without the background of the serious crisis of the Rāthor state under Ranmal the later developments under Rāo Jodhaji cannot be understood. <sup>2</sup> 222, II, p. 951; 220 for 1916, p. 217. <sup>3</sup> 222, II, p. 954; 43; 42, III, p. 522.

<sup>4</sup> The pressure of the Bhattis and Mohilas had forced already rāo Chondā to accept the Sisodiās as allies who annexed parts of Mārwar (cp. 220 for 1915, p. 114 f. Rānā Lakha and Mokal had become the overlords of the Rāthors, and only in his role as vassal could Ranmal think of overthrowing the young Kūmbharānā. Kūmbha's later policy, thus, merely revived claims undertaken already by his predecessors.

<sup>5</sup> 222, I, p. 336, mentions 32 fortresses, including Mt. Ābu.

<sup>6</sup> 222, II, p. 947 f.; 42, III, p. 523. Except for part of the walls very little is left of this original fort. At Rāo-Jodha-jis-Falsa only a few battlements remain, the gate has been replaced by Maldeo's much stronger works.

<sup>7</sup> 222, I, p. 337. Of Sanskrit works of the reign the Rūpamandana has become important for art historians (Cp. 140).

<sup>8</sup> 222, I, p. 337 f.; 146; 25; 136; 171; 27. <sup>9</sup> For the traditional portraits of the Bikanēr rulers see 31, pp. 9 and 11.

<sup>10</sup> 220 for 1917, p. 67 ff.; 177; 209.



not only strengthened his own authority, but also resulted in a great expansion of his realm towards the east (Mertā and Sāmbhar), north (Mohilāvati and Bīkānēr) and west (Pokaran and Phalodi). On his death the factions clashed. Jasamā Devī of Būndi had been his first and favourite queen. When, only two years after Jodha's death, her third son Sātāl died, she placed her fourth son Suja (Sūrajmall) on the throne. The opposition regarded this as a coup d'état, as in their opinion the throne should have fallen to Bīkā (Vikrama), the first-born of the Sānkhilā queen Naurangā Devī. Her faction had the support of many of Rāo Jodha's brothers who, like Jodha, had all been Bhattis on their mother's side.

When the conflict came to a head, both parties had been long entrenched. Even during the life time of Jodha the sons of Naurangā Devī had felt dissatisfied, and Bīkā had acted on a jocose suggestion of his father to conquer a kingdom of his own. Near the present town of Bīkānēr lands had become deserted, as the Sānkhilās of Janglū had sustained terrible losses in a feud over the marriage of Bīkā's grandfather with Kodāma Devī of Pugal (fig. 16).<sup>1</sup> Thus the Sānkhilās summoned Bīkā as an ally.<sup>2</sup> In 1465 he arrived with several hundred followers, and, after some unsatisfactory experiments at Deshnok, Kodāmdesar and Janglū, at last settled on the site of the present Bīkānēr Town where he constructed a mud fort in 1488. There were many initial difficulties. The Sānkhilās had, of course, not expected another lord, and the rājā of Pugal, first friendly in the hope of finding support against the rulers of Jaisalmer and the Muslims of Mūltān, soon became suspicious of his new son-in-law. But Bīkā's tact and valour, and the invaluable help of Karnijī, a saintly Charan (bard) woman, whom the people revered as an incarnation of the Great Goddess, smoothed the conqueror's path. Soon the Jat tribes, north east of Bīkānēr, also sought his protection. Then the expansion of his family further to the east involved him in larger issues. There Rāo Jodha had conquered the Mohil country and given it to Bīkā's younger brother, Bida. This annexation led to a war with Sārang Khān, the Lodī governor of Hissar, who came to the help of the Mohil chief. It was Bīkā who, in cooperation first with his uncle and friend Kāndhal,<sup>3</sup> then with his father, ejected the Muslims, and took possession of Mohilāvati. With Rāo Jodha's death the precarious link of paternal authority which hitherto had kept the inimical factions in check, was broken. Though the two states now drifted further apart, the balance of power was not yet disturbed, as Jodha's successor Sātāl was the senior of Naurangā Devī's sons. But the installation of Jasamā Devī's fourth son Suja (Sūrajmall) at Jodhpur meant an open rupture, as Suja was junior to Rāo Jodha's fourth son Bīkā. When not even Bīkā's rights of precedence over Sūrajmall were acknowledged, the first of a long series of wars between the two Rāthor states broke out. Bīkā stormed Jodhpur and forced Jasamā Devī to hand over to him the crown and insignia.<sup>4</sup> When he died in 1504 he had become lord of 3,000 villages and his influence extended to the borders of Ajmer, Delhi district and the South-Eastern Panjāb.

The weak rule of Sūrajmall<sup>5</sup> (1491-1516), the civil wars of Rāo Gangā (1516-1532) with his brother Biramde (Vikramadeva) and later with his uncle Shekha, and finally the defeat of Gangā by the Mughal emperor Bābur in the battle of Khānua (near Bayāna) in 1527, as member of the Rājput federation under Rānā Sanga (Sangrām, 1508-27) of Mewār, permitted Bīkā's successors Narojī (1504-1505), Lūnkaranjī (Lonakarna, 1505-1525) and Jetsijī (Jait Singh, 1526-1539) to consolidate and extend the young state. This expansion proceeded mainly in the direction of the Panjāb and Jaisalmer.<sup>6</sup> For towards the east Nāgaur<sup>7</sup> was interposed between Bīkānēr and Jodhpur as an outpost of Muslim rule. Occupied by a Yamini general in the 11th century, by a number of Turkish governors between 1195 and circa 1270, amongst them Muhammad bin Bakhtiyār in 1195, Ulugh Khān (1253-57) and the later sultān Balban (1266-87), it had been a centre of Muslim missionary activities until it was reconquered by the Bhattis.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. p. 34 note 9; 11 for 1917-18, p. 44 ff.; 220 for 1916, p. 217 ff.

<sup>2</sup> 164, p. 1 ff.; 222, II, p. 1123 ff.; 220 for 1916, p. 202 ff., p. 217, p. 228 ff. The Gazetteer will further on be quoted only in exceptional cases.

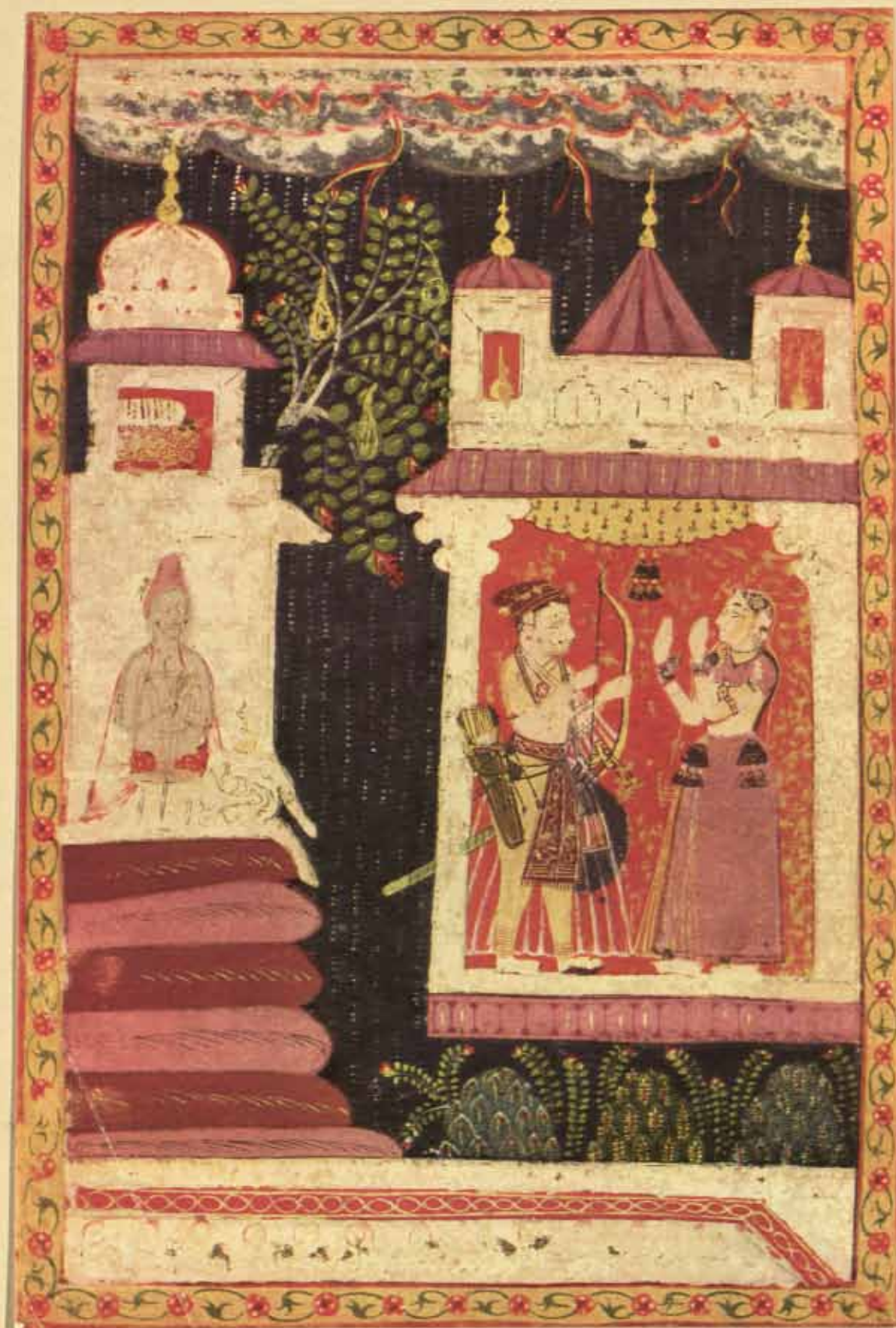
<sup>3</sup> 177; 209. <sup>4</sup> 31, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Sūrajmall (Sujo) was personally not a weakling. But most of his reign he had been a minor and, still an adolescent, he fell, gallantly fighting, in the much celebrated rescue of the abducted virgins of Pīpar 1516.

<sup>6</sup> 220 for 1916, p. 228.

<sup>7</sup> 43; 42, III, p. 35 ff.; 73, I, p. 151 ff.; 42, III, p. 64 ff., p. 303 f., p. 531.





## THE RETURN OF THE HUSBAND

Illustration to the *Rasikpriyā* of Keśavadās Sanādhya Misra: Rājput Miniature, Udaipur (?), beginning of the 17th century (?). Lallgarh Palace, Bīkānēr.







It was also the scene of a touching romance by Amir Hasan Dihlavi.<sup>1</sup> But early in the 15th century it had become the capital of the small Khānwāda sultanate founded by Shams Khān Dandāni, a younger brother of Muzaffar I of Gujarāt. Its overthrow by the great Rānā Kūmbha of Mewār had merely prepared the way for a protectorate of the Lodī sultāns of Delhi over that strong desert fortress.

Towards the southwest the attachment of the small rāj of Pugal had already created tension with Jaisalmer,<sup>2</sup> the suzerain Bhatti kingdom, which soon led to serious friction and war. Rāo Lūnkaran took Jaisalmer, but was at last defeated and slain in 1525, having been deserted by the Bidavat clan in an encounter with the combined Bhattis and the Muslim forces of Mūltān. As already mentioned, Bikāji had taken the fief of his younger brother Bida under his protection; now, in this decisive showdown old rancour proved stronger than fealty.

Towards the North East, on the other hand, there were vast territories only loosely controlled by the Sayyid and Lodī governors of Sirsa and Hissar in the Panjāb. As the Lodī sultāns were preoccupied with their wars with the sultāns of Jaunpur and Mālwa and the Rājputs of Mewār and Gwālior, Lūnkaranji could annex the country of the Chāyal Rājputs. His son, Jetsi, extended his influence even further to the East as an ally of Sangaji of Amer (Jaipur State) and Rāo Gangā of Jodhpur, and as cousin to the mighty Rānā Sanga of Mewār. But the annexation of Chāyalwāra brought Jetsi into conflict with the Mughals over the possession of Bhatner.<sup>3</sup> After its destruction by Mahmūd of Ghazni in 1001 this mighty fort, which controlled the Ghaggar Valley, had been rebuilt during the Mongol invasions of the 13th century, but was wrested by the Bhattis from the family of Shaikh Jalā-ud-dīn Bukhārī. In 1398 Timūr of Samarkand had taken it and massacred the whole population, but on his retreat from India had restored the place to the Bhattis.<sup>4</sup> In 1447, however, the fort came into the possession of the Chāyal Rājputs. Thus, after Chāyalwāra had been annexed, rāo Jetsi caused Bhatner to be taken, during Bābur's invasion of India, by his general Khator, a descendent of Bikāji's uncle Khāndal. It was, of course, to be expected that the Mughals, now preparing their conquest of another great Muslim empire in India, could not tolerate the occupation of such an important Muslim fortress by any Rājput clan. When in 1531 Kāmran, the brother of the Mughal emperor Humāyūn, extended his control over the Punjāb, he stormed Bhatner and advanced as far as the gates of Bikānēr.<sup>5</sup> In 1537, however, Kāmran had to march on Āgra against prince 'Askari, Humāyūn's other brother, who had in Gujarāt deserted the emperor in order to proclaim himself king. This permitted Jetsi's son Kalyān Mall, to regain all his territories. But the invasion had weakened the state so much that it collapsed when Rāo Māldeo of Jodhpur attacked, slew Jetsi and took Bikānēr Fort in 1539.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. *The Golden Age of Bikāner*

And yet it was this very disaster which laid the foundation of the Golden Age of Bikānēr history. For it drove the descendants of Bikāji into an alliance with the Mughal emperors against the rājās of Jodhpur, gave them a foremost place amongst the prominent generals and governors of one of the most splendid empires at a time when there was no hope for independent Hindu states, and a not less prominent place in the flourishing cultural life, which sprang from the contact between Muslim, Rājput and European traditions.

First it had seemed that Jodhpur would chiefly profit from the defeat of Khānua. For the Mughals, it had not been more than a diversion to safeguard their right flank during their further advance against the Muslim sultanates of Jaunpur and Bengal. Instead, the ambitious Bahādur Shāh of Gujarāt took Chitorgarh by storm in 1533 and completed the eclipse of Mewār. But Bahādur Shāh was in 1535 defeated

<sup>1</sup> 37.      <sup>2</sup> 164; 220 for 1916, p. 202, p. 228 f.; 42, III, p. 533.

<sup>3</sup> 42, III, p. 79, p. 196 f., p. 520; 73, I, p. 235, p. 249 f.; 156, p. 34; 11 for 1917-18, p. 21 ff.; 222, II, p. 1163 ff.

<sup>4</sup> 66, III, pp. 420-27, pp. 487-91.

<sup>5</sup> 220 for 1916, p. 228 f.; 154. There is some disagreement regarding the dates, S. 1561 and S. 1591 being likewise mentioned.

<sup>6</sup> According to the Kiyant and the Gazetteer (164, p. 16) Jetsi died in 1541; however, the traditional dates for this period are not reliable, nor can they be checked with the help of the devalis. The synchronism with Indo-Muslim historical events demands 1539.



by Humāyūn who, in his turn, had to relinquish his conquests in order to defend himself against Sher Khān of Bengal. Four years later, Sher Shāh had been crowned emperor at Delhi, only to die within five years. And in 1555 his weak successors were finally overthrown by the returning Mughals.

These years of turmoil were the chance for rāo Māldeo<sup>1</sup> (Malla Deo, 1532-62/9) of Jodhpur. Māldeo was of the type of the great dictators, of boundless ambition, unscrupulous, treacherous, reckless and a firm believer in force. Having assassinated his father, he fell on the surrounding small semidependent and independent states, took Nāgor, Ajmer, Bikānēr, Jālor, Siwāna, Sirohi, Dūndhār (Jaipur) and parts of Mewār, and secured his conquests by mighty forts. However, his ambiguous policy towards the defeated emperor Humāyūn, who in 1542 had sought refuge in Mārwar, led to Māldeo's defeat by Sher Shāh in 1544. Though he survived the Sūrī dynasty, Māldeo was at last, in 1562, driven into exile by Akbar the Great.

In 1539 rāo Jetsi had been slain, and Bikānēr had fallen after the whole garrison had perished in a last desperate sally. His son Kalyān Mall (1539-1571) retired to Sirsa, on the frontier of the Panjāb, from whence he tried to obtain help from Humāyūn.<sup>2</sup> His brother, Bhīmraj, joined the Mughal army at Delhi, a gesture which was to prove valuable in the future, though useless at the moment. For after his defeat at Kanauj, Humāyūn<sup>3</sup> passed in full retreat through the Panjāb to Sind. Hence he again returned to Mārwar, following an invitation from Māldeo and camped near Bikānēr Town in the early monsoon of 1542. But before the Jodhpur rājā's double-dealing and Sher Shāh's advance on Nāgaur he had at last to flee via Phalodi, Pokaran, Jaisalmer, Amarkot and Sind to the court of Shāh Tahmāsp of Persia. These events permitted Kalyān Mall to recover. He collected round him the Jats of Godāra and discontents from Mārwar, such as Thākur Biramde of Mertā. Bhīmraj had in the meantime won the favour of Sher Shāh and when the latter started on his campaign against Māldeo, Kalyān Mall joined his army. The nobles of Bikānēr, first among them Kishandās of Rāwatsar, now began to flock to their rājā. Māldeo now voluntarily evacuated Bikānēr Town and Fort, in order to concentrate all his forces against Sher Shāh. Māldeo's defeat in 1544 permitted Kalyān Mall to regain the whole kingdom of his father. Even Bhatner<sup>4</sup> which the Chāyal Rājputs had retaken, came again into his hands. However, after Sher Shāh's death in 1545, the Sūrī power declined whereas Māldeo recovered; and Bikānēr, badly shaken, remained weak until Akbar's glorious campaigns and pro-Rājput policy offered her another chance.

In the year of Sher Shāh's death Humāyūn has regained Kābul and Qandahār. Ten years later he returned to India and entered Delhi. In 1556 Akbar came to the throne and in 1560 he dismissed his tutor, Bairām Khān,<sup>5</sup> and assumed full powers. Probably on this occasion the contact between Bikānēr and the Mughals was resumed. For the Lord Protector, instead of going on the convened pilgrimage to Mecca, changed his route after Nāgaur and sought refuge with Kalyān Mall. From there he proceeded towards Bhātinda in the Panjāb, but was defeated at Jālandhar and had to submit to Akbar. Soon afterwards Bairām Khān was assassinated by Pathāns in Gujarāt. Kalyān Mall must have been anxious to remain on friendly terms, since Nāgaur<sup>6</sup> had now become a Mughal fief. But it was not until 1570 that he made his formal submission during Akbar's visit to Ajmer.<sup>7</sup> The lesson of events during this decade had been too obvious. In 1561 Akbar had attacked Mārwar, in 1562 the strong fort of Mertā had been taken and Māldeo forced into vassalage, in 1564 the Gond rāj had been conquered, in 1568 Chitorgarh and in 1569 Rānthambhor and Kālinjar had been stormed after bitter resistance. Kalyān Mall died in 1571, soon after this decisive audience. His son Rāi Singh joined the Mughal service. With this alliance the whole position of Bikānēr changed. The unstable, poor and unimportant desert

<sup>1</sup> 222, II, p. 953 ff.; 42, IV mentions Maldeo only incidentally. Nevertheless he must be regarded as the most important ruler of Rājputānā next to Kumbharānā, as a politician, military reformer, builder and art mecenās.

<sup>2</sup> Kalyān Mall had become a de facto exile whose kingdom had been annexed by Maldeo. Only Humāyūn's wanderings and the defeat of Maldeo by Sher Shāh prevented a consolidation of Maldeo's conquest and saved Kalyān Mall.

<sup>3</sup> 23; 220 for 1916, p. 228 f.    <sup>4</sup> 156; 164, p. 137.    <sup>5</sup> 66, V, p. 265; 2, II, p. 157 ff.; 1, I, p. 316 ff.    <sup>6</sup> 2, II, p. 157; 1, I, p. 316.

<sup>7</sup> 1, I, p. 310, pp. 357-9; 2, II, p. 516 f.; 66, V, p. 335 f.; 42, IV, p. 102. Bhagwāndās of Amber seems to have played the role of mediator.



kingdom became a power within the Mughal Empire, and wealth, luxuries, art and culture streamed into the desert, as the price paid for the blood of the Rāthor soldiers, who fought the wars of the Grand Mughals.

As a matter of fact Akbar was prepared to grant to his loyal Rājput allies all honours and prerogatives compatible with their position within a great imperial organization. He was already thinking of further conquests in Bihār and Bengal, Gujarāt, Sind and Kashmir. The Rājputs had been defeated, but both Mewār under rānā Pratāp, and Mārwar under Māldeo's son Chandra Sen remained defiant. Akbar needed not only soldiers for his further conquests, he also had to keep in check the still obstinate Rājput princes. This he did by playing the smaller rājās, Bikānēr, Amber, Būndi, Orchhā against the leading states, and within them the opposition parties against those in power.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Bikānēr was set against Jodhpur. Rāi Singh<sup>2</sup> was, as a mansabdār of 4,000, raised to the top rank of imperial grandees, invested with the jāgīrs of Nāgaur and Mertā, and entrusted with the task of crushing the guerillas of Chandra Sen. So he could not only revenge the humiliation of his father and grandfather, but even dream of reuniting the Rāthor kingdoms under his rule. In 1572 he relieved Nāgaur<sup>3</sup> which had been besieged by the rebellious Muhammad Hussain Mirzā, occupied Mārwar and took part in Akbar's first battle with rāo Sūrthān of Sirohi and in another invasion of Gujarāt, where he killed the rebel Mirzā in the following year. In 1575 he stormed Siwānā, where Chandra Sen was seriously wounded. In 1576 he took, in cooperation with several Mughal generals, Jālor and Sirohi and made Sūrthān Singh his personal prisoner, protected Akbar's left flank in Gujarāt against Udaipur, and in 1578 even took Jodhpur fort.<sup>4</sup> But Akbar's plans went further. The guerilla war had broken up Mārwar, the nobles had slipped from the control of Chandra Sen.<sup>5</sup> Thus, when Udai Singh (1581-95) ascended the throne, he reversed the policy of Mārwar, submitted to Akbar and devoted himself to the restoration of the royal authority and administration. In consequence Mārwar, with the exception of Phalodi and Nāgaur,<sup>6</sup> was evacuated in 1582 by Rāi Singh's troops, and Jodhpur Fort was returned to Udai Singh. Rāi Singh was transferred to the Afghān frontier, taking part in 1581 in Akbar's fight against his younger brother, Muhammad Hakīm, then in 1586-87 assisting rājā Mān Singh of Amber in suppressing the Raushanāi revolt and finally subduing the Balūchīs. In 1585, however, he had been temporarily sent to Khandesh in the Deccan, and from 1587 to 1592 he was the general-in-command on the Deccan front.<sup>7</sup> When in 1593 a great expeditionary force was assembled in Mālwa against Burhān II of Ahmadnagar, Rāi Singh was appointed prince Dāniyāl's military adviser, by the side of the Khānkhānān. He had been raised to the rank of rājā, and his mansab to 5,000, the highest attainable by a noble; he was now the equal of the highest Muslim grandees, and his revenues had increased to tenfold of what his father's heritage had yielded.<sup>8</sup> Since 1586 he had been closely related by marriage to prince Salīm, the later emperor Jahāngīr. The apogee of success seemed reached; but then trouble began to overshadow the last years of his splendid career.

Jodhpur had recovered, and Udai Singh's son, Sūr Singh, was employed by the emperor against the indomitable Sūrthān Singh of Sirohi and, later, in the last drive against Muzaffar III of Gujarāt.<sup>9</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> 94.

<sup>2</sup> 5; I, p. 357-9.

<sup>3</sup> 66, V, 3/4; 2, III, p. 226 ff., p. 278 f.; 42, IV, p. 104, 108; 3, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> I, I, p. 357, f.; 164, p. 27; 73, II, p. 235 ff.; 222, II, p. 957 involuntarily corroborates the fact by passing over the years 1562-81 in complete silence. See also note 6.

<sup>5</sup> 222, II, p. 961 mentions the capture of Mertā with the help of the Mughals; we can make out by inference that there existed a strong opposition in Mārwar prepared to join Bikānēr and the Mughals. It rallied round the chiefs of Mertā, descendants of Dudaji, another son of Jodhaji who, however, had not succeeded in making themselves independent. Viramde of Mertā had been dispossessed by Māldeo and had approached Shēr Shāh for help; Mertā fell, first, to the Mughals 1562; it continued to be the heart of opposition in the 18th century. To this must be added the civil wars between rāo Gangā and his uncle Shekha and brother Viramde. Māldeo's brutal methods could drive this opposition underground, but surely not win it over.

<sup>6</sup> Nāgaur had been added to Bikānēr in 1572, Phalodi in 1578 (cp. 220 for 1915, p. 85 ff.).

<sup>7</sup> According to 164 he was governor of Burhānpur, but Burhānpur was occupied first in 1600 and Khāndēsh annexed 1601. However, Berār was invaded in 1586 and preparations may have begun one year earlier; and Rāi Singh was one of the two generals who usually commanded Akbar's armies. Rāi Singh's appointment as adviser for prince Dāniyāl on the Mālwa front 1593 proves that he must have had a long experience in this theatre of war. The fact that the *Āin-i Akbarī* (I, p. 358) does not mention Rāi Singh between the 31st and 35th year, must have been due to his absence in the Deccan.

<sup>8</sup> 164, p. 25; I, II, p. 270.

<sup>9</sup> 222, II, 969 f.



Rāi Singh had countered these set-backs. Akbar had recompensed him for the evacuation of Mārṡār with vast and rich fiefs in Kāthiāwār and Surat.<sup>1</sup> These rich revenues permitted the rājā to construct a gigantic fort at Bīkānēr, for which the stones had to be brought through the desert 200 miles from Jaisalmer.<sup>2</sup> Defended in accordance with the then most modern military principles, provided with several inexhaustible wells, and adorned with beautiful palaces, it was to prove impregnable until our own times. Sūrthān Singh of Sirohi had married a daughter of Rāi Singh's younger brother, Prithvī Rāj, and in 1592 Rāi Singh himself married a daughter of the Rāval of Jaisalmer.<sup>3</sup> The fort was nearing its completion after five years' hard work, and Rāi Singh was in an exuberant mood, scattering his newly acquired wealth to friends, priests and minstrels.<sup>4</sup>

But trouble was brewing within the state. During his long absence in the imperial service, Rāi Singh had been forced to leave the administration of Bīkānēr in the hands of a deputy. This trusted man had been his very efficient minister, Karam Chand Bachavat.<sup>5</sup> But uncontrolled power had slowly sapped the loyalty of the minister, who dreaded the return of the rājā. There was Rāi Singh's brother, Rām Singh, once a valiant warrior, who had abandoned war for political and amorous intrigue at home and was at last slain in such an affair.<sup>6</sup> There was the other brother Prithvīrāj, the romantic poet.<sup>7</sup> There was Dalpat Singh, the rājā's overbearing eldest son. There were the discontented hereditary priests and bards who had lost their special privileges. Karam Chand had influential friends at the imperial court. Akbar's interest in Indian religious life<sup>8</sup> had attracted Surasundara Sūri to the court as early as 1562; and his successor Hiravijaya Sūri acquired even greater influence over the emperor. This success of the Gujarātī Jain community had stimulated the activity of the Jains at Bīkānēr.<sup>9</sup> As Rāi Singh controlled vast fiefs in Gujarāt and Kāthiāwār, the Jains of Bīkānēr likewise felt it their duty to gain the emperor's ear and to obtain privileges for the sacred mountain shrines of Gīrnār and Śatrunjaya. In 1583 Rāi Singh first succeeded in obtaining the return of 1,050 Jain idols, looted from Sirohi in 1576, which he dedicated to the Chintāmani Temple at Bīkānēr. Eight years later Karam Chand introduced Jinachandra Sūri of Jodhpur at Akbar's court. If the suspicion of the Emperor could be aroused, the old lion might be overthrown, and the gates of his mighty fort be closed against him. Relations between Akbar and Rāi Singh's friend, prince Salīm, had worsened, though the prince did not actually revolt till 1599. The result was that the Emperor thought it advisable to remove Rāi Singh from home and made him military adviser to prince Dāniyāl<sup>10</sup> in 1593. The rājā, of course, was unwilling to quit the field before these intrigues. The refusal of Dāniyāl to proceed to Mālwa saved him, but his reluctance was naturally interpreted as evidence of disloyalty. Finally in 1595 Rāi Singh crushed the whole conspiracy, but Karam Chand and his family fled to the imperial court where they continued their intrigues. New material for these intrigues was provided by a clash with the father of one of Akbar's many concubines who had been deservedly punished for his outrageous behaviour during a visit to Bhatner,<sup>11</sup> but had then complained at the court. Akbar long delayed action, but at last gave Bhatner to the dissatisfied prince, Dalpat Singh, who even tried to expel his father from the entire Bīkānēr rāj. At last the old emperor and Karam Chand died in the same year, 1604, and Jahāngīr, through so many troubles the intimate friend of Rāi Singh, ascended the throne.<sup>12</sup> For seven more years the old lion served as warden of the marches, directing from his governor's seat at Burhānpur<sup>13</sup> the Mughal armies

<sup>1</sup> 164, p. 25; 1, II, p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> 164, p. 27, p. 151 ff., p. 107; 170, IIIA, p. 382 ff.; 156, p. 5. Rāi Singhji fortified also Phalodi, 220 for 1915, p. 85 ff.

<sup>3</sup> 164, p. 25 ff., p. 28; 3, p. 63. <sup>4</sup> Ibid.; 220 for 1916, p. 228 ff., for 1917, p. 17 ff. <sup>5</sup> 5; 152; 214, 156, p. 94.

<sup>6</sup> 220 for 1917, p. 10 ff.; 164, p. 27; a late miniature (DN 35) alludes to one of his adventures.

<sup>7</sup> 31, pp. 14-16; 164, p. 28; 222, I, p. 398 ff.; 220 for 1917, p. 5 ff.

<sup>8</sup> 131; 147; 148; 208; 47; 61; 176a.—Also the Jesuits of Goa passed through Bikaner on the way to Akbar's court, cp. 211, p. 251; 137; 138, p. 47. <sup>9</sup> 153. <sup>10</sup> 42, IV, p. 141; 1, p. 357 ff.; 166, p. 253; see also preceeding page.

<sup>11</sup> 164, p. 29; the story cannot be corroborated, but is plausible. The Mughal occupation is testified by the inscription of Rāy Manohar Rāj, A.D. 1600, see 189. For Dalpat Singh's discontent cp. 1, I, no 252. <sup>12</sup> 31, p. 17, see 189. (Farmān Sept. 1605 requesting Rāi Singhji's support).

<sup>13</sup> These years were also not without trouble as on instigation of the Jain āchārya Jināsīmha-Sūri Rāi Singh was dragged into the revolt of sultān Khusrau whose mother was the sister of his friend Mān Singh of Amber. Cp. 42, IV, p. 157; 1, I, p. 310, p. 357 ff.; 147.



which successively tried to oust Malik Ambar, the last dictator of Ahmadnagar. In Burhānpur he died in 1611, the greatest ruler of Bīkānēr.

For also in cultural life his reign had meant a revolution. The country which Bīkāji had conquered had been poor, thinly populated desert, with only two towns, Janglū with its mud walls, and Bhatner with its Turkish fortifications. The only temples worth mentioning were the ruins of the Chauhān period, of other works of art the primitive devalis of local chieftains, and in literature the songs of the charans and of the herdsmen. Bīkāji founded Bīkānēr, then a small settlement on the ridge at the southern end of the present town, round the Lakshminātha temple. Bīkāji-kī Tekri (fig. 32), his second fort—later demolished—and the platform of the Nāgnechiji temple were rather clumsy imitations of the stone architecture at that time developing in Mārwar and Mewār on Gujarātī Jain models. The idols he brought from Jodhpur and Mandor; the great Bhaironji (Bhairava) image which he set up at Rāo Jodha's tank at Kodamdesar, is a crude, cone-shaped stone block.<sup>1</sup> He and his successors had to devote their energies chiefly to the task of making the inhospitable country habitable. The inscriptions mention as charitable works almost exclusively the construction of wells and tanks.

However, already under Lūnkarān, Jetsi and Kalyānmall the cultural level was rising considerably. The new state attracted a wealthy Jain community which restored the old temples, such as those at Morkhāna, Tārānagar or Bhīnasar, or built new ones like the gigantic Bhāndasar (fig. 22). The Rāos added their own creations such as Lūnkarān's Lakshminātha Temple, Jetsi's shrine for the deified Charan prophetess Karniji (fig. 26) and the Kapila Temple at Kolāyat. Nāgnechiji (Durgā Rāshtrasenā), the family goddess of the Rāthors, and Lakshminātha, the patron of the state, were soon displaced in public favour by Karniji, as the historic incarnation of the Devī. And popular Vaishnava mysticism was revived by the Rājput saint Jambhaji.<sup>2</sup>

But all this proved hardly more than a prelude to the new developments under Rāi Singh. As one of the greatest and richest Hindu nobles of the Mughal empire, he had ample opportunity to see and learn, collect and encourage. Though Mughal civilization seems to have remained a closed book to him, he was the more susceptible to the influence of contemporary Rājput, Gujarātī and Deccanī-Hindu culture. Bīkānēr grew into a wealthy town with houses beautifully carved with "Akbari Doors" (fig. 24) such as are found in the Old City of Lahore, and with new rich temples such as the Ādinātha, and Neminātha (fig. 23). His fort (fig. 33) is even to-day a highly impressive structure, and what still survives of its buildings, the Sūraj Parol (fig. 27), the lower storeys of the Zenāna, the Hazūri Gate, the Kārkhānā Kalān and the Har Mandir, reveal all the wealth of early Gujarātī-Rājput architecture and sculpture. The monument for his father Kalyān Mall (fig. 29), though somewhat heavy, charms by the grace of its dancing girls and musicians. He brought back bronze idols from Gujarāt,<sup>3</sup> obtained from Akbar the Jain idols of the Sirohi<sup>4</sup> booty, collected excellent miniatures and illustrated manuscripts from Amber, Mārwar and even Burhānpur; and probably in his reign a still primitive local school of painting began to flourish. His often extravagant gifts to the charans and bhatas encouraged bardic poetry in both the Dingala (old Mārwarī) and the Dhūndhārī (Eastern Rājasthānī) dialects. His brother, Prithvī Rāj, was famous as a poet even at Akbar's court. The Jain scholars were also encouraged by the rājā; Padmasundara Sūri,<sup>5</sup> the author of the Akbarshāhī-Sringāradarpana, came to Akbar's court from Bīkāner; and the long Sanskrit prasastri (eulogy) at the Sūraj (Durgā) Gate<sup>6</sup> of the Fort is one of the earliest Rājput attempts to reconstruct Rāthor history back before Sihāji to Jayachandra Gaharwār of Kanauj and to the sun-god. On the other hand, the new wealth of the rising aristocracy and their hold on the land led to an excessive expansion of the feudal system. Many tribes, especially the Jats, were sacrificed to the need of finding new fiefs.

After Rāi Singh's death the clouds which had overshadowed his last years became darker. For the general current of Mughal politics turned more and more into a course unfavourable to Rājput interests.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 220 for 1916, p. 217; 164, p. 100 and local tradition.

<sup>2</sup> They are now stored in the Kārkhāna Gangā-Jal.

<sup>3</sup> A Ponwār Rājput, born at Pīpasar, died at Samrathal; 15th century.

<sup>4</sup> 153.

<sup>5</sup> 208.

<sup>6</sup> 220 for 1917, p. 17 ff.

<sup>7</sup> 94.



With the progressive absorption of the older Muslim sultanates, the empire of the Grand Mughals tended again to be identified with Muslim supremacy over Hindu India. Imperial policy could not dispense with the excellent services of the Rājput soldiers, but it accepted their dynastic quarrels as an opportunity to break and weaken the Rājput kingdoms, and to reduce the rājās to officers completely dependent on the "bon plaisir" of the Grand Mughal. Under Aurangzēb this became part and parcel of a conscious anti-Hindu policy, until the inconclusive and completely exhausting war against the Marāthas of the Deccan and the sullen hostility of the Rājput princes forced him to temporise. This proved to be the prelude to another phase of Rājput history, for the civil wars after Aurangzeb's death and the disintegration of the empire were to grant them another spell of complete independence.

In 1611 Dalpat Singh came to the long-coveted throne of Bikānēr; but Rāi Singh's immense fiefs in Kāthiāwār and Surat were withdrawn by Jahāngīr.<sup>1</sup> Dalpat Singh, supported by those former conspirators against his father who had survived, tried to recoup his losses by oppressing the Bhattis of the western Ghaggar Valley and by despoiling his younger brother Sūr Singh of most of his fief of Nāgaur. Thereupon Jahāngīr gave the state to Sūr Singh. In the fight with the imperial forces in 1613, Dalpat Singh was betrayed by the discontented nobles, and in 1620 he was slain, in a desperate attempt to escape from imprisonment, at Ajmer, with the help of Thākur Hathī Singh Champāvat.<sup>2</sup>

Sūr Singh, then only a boy of seventeen, succeeded at last in avenging his father by destroying the members of Karam Chand Bachavat's family, who, treacherously enticed back to Bikānēr, were all but one massacred after a desperate fight. Shortly afterwards (1615), Phalodī<sup>3</sup> was detached from Bikānēr and bestowed on Sūr Singh of Jodhpur, as part of the reward for his services and those of his son Gaj Singh in the final subjection of Gujarāt and Mewār (1615). For many years Sūr Singh loyally served the Mughals, and a farman issued by Shāhjahān two years after his accession promised special favours for Sūr Singh's cooperation in the Ahmadnagar expedition of 1630. At home his considerate rule encountered no difficulties, and only the murder of Rāval Nāthū of Jaisalmer, his daughter's son, by the usurper, Manohardās, cast a cloud over his last years.

In 1634 Sūr Singh's successor Karan Singh (1631-1669/74) lost another province, Nāgaur.<sup>4</sup> This Shāhjahān bestowed on the valiant Amar Singh, who had been banished by rājā Gaj Singh from Jodhpur for a murder, which though due to a minor point d'honneur, had cost the lives of his niece and of her fiancé, a prince of Rewa. Though Amar Singh was himself killed in 1644, following a duel with Salābat Khān in the imperial durbār, Nāgaur was held by four more generations of his descendants, a thorn in the side both of Māwār and Bikānēr. Later Karan Singh fought with the Mughal armies in the Deccan and obtained there the fief of Jowari<sup>5</sup> in 1644. In 1647 he returned to Bikānēr,<sup>6</sup> possibly on the way to the Uzbēg front in Afghānistān, and subjected and divided the rebel vassal state of Pugal. In 1658 he joined Aurangzēb against Dārā Shikōh in the civil war caused by Shāhjahān's serious illness in 1657. He fought successfully at Samugarh, and later in the campaign in the Panjāb, which ended with the capture and execution of Dārā Shikōh. Probably he had hoped to be rewarded for these services with part of his family heritage in Mārwār, as rājā Jaswant Singh, the successor of Gaj Singh, had fought on Dārā's side and had played a prominent role in the disastrous battle of Dharmatpur. Disappointed, Karan Singh rose in rebellion,<sup>7</sup> as did several other Rājput princes, but was pardoned and sent to the Deccan. In 1666 we find him governor of the great fortress of Daulatābād,<sup>8</sup> so dissatisfied that the

<sup>1</sup> Dalpat had offended Jahāngīr before, cp. I, no. 152, where also an account of his military services. Probably the emperor regarded the return of Bhatner a sufficient compensation for a prince whose succession rights were contested by his brother. For further references 115, p. 557.

<sup>2</sup> Sati stones of his widows, 220 for 1917, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> 220 for 1915, p. 85 ff. Sūr Singh received Phalodi back in 1616, but two years later had to hand it definitively over to Sūraj Singh of Jodhpur. 1623-24 it was temporarily under Muslim control.

<sup>4</sup> 164, p. 33, correct only for beginning of reign. Cp. 222, II, p. 976 ff. However, the foundation of the Nāgaur rāj was merely part of the Mughal policy of weakening the Rājput states. Cp. 94.

<sup>5</sup> Near Aurangabad, ceded 1904, cp. 31, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> This visit fixes the birth year of mahārājā Anūp Singh on 1647-48.

<sup>7</sup> 42, IV, p. 230; 186, III, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> 72, II, p. 19 f.



Mughals thought of doing away with him, but saved by rāo Bhāo Singh of Būndi, another dissatisfied exile on the Deccan front.

He had reason to be apprehensive. The reduction of the great Rājput states<sup>1</sup> was progressing inexorably and the rājās, removed to distant frontiers, were helpless to counter the intrigues let loose against them at home. In 1625 Kotāh had been detached from Būndi, and in 1634 Nāgaur from Bikānēr. Since 1628 Mughal troops had campaigned in Bundelkhand against rājā Jhujhār Singh and his successor Champat Rāi. About 1660 rājā Ātmarām Gaur of Sheopur had been loosed against Būndi; Sabal Singh of Jaisalmer had after 1651 resumed the struggle with Bikānēr over Pugal. Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur was in disgrace; and after the death of the great Mīrzā Rājā Jai Singh I in 1667 Amber was also dismembered. The emperor was thinking of granting Bikānēr State to Banmālīdās,<sup>2</sup> the eldest though illegitimate son of Karan Singh, as a reward for his conversion to Islām. It was all too obvious that Aurangzeb was working slowly, but systematically, for the destruction of the Rājput princes.

Events were fast moving towards a crisis. In 1668 Hindu religious festivals were prohibited, not to speak of other humiliating restrictions; in 1669 the destruction of all Hindu temples was ordered and ruthlessly executed, even in the Rājput states. Finally in 1679 the old Muslim "poll-tax" was imposed on all Hindus. The resentment was bitter and the rājās tried to save at least the most venerated idols of the great places of pilgrimage. In 1670 the Jats rebelled, then the Sikhs; in 1670 revolt in Bundelkhand blazed afresh, in 1672 the Satnāmī sect rose against the Mughals. Aurangzēb hit back. While still stationed in the Deccan Karan Singh was in 1669<sup>3</sup> deprived of his states, and in the next year his son, Mohan Singh, was assassinated at Aurangābād by the servants of prince Muhammad Sultān.<sup>4</sup> Similarly Jaswant Singh of Mārwar was sent to the Afghān frontier, and his heir Prithī Singh poisoned one year later at the imperial court.

In 1667 the mountains were again aflame. Two great armies under Shamshēr Khān and Muhammad Amīn Khān had to be sent to crush the Afghans; but in 1672 they annihilated the army of Muhammad Amīn. The emperor then sent an army from the Deccan front under the command of Mahābat Khān, to whose higher officers Karan Singh must also have belonged. Of course, in a war against fanatic Muslims it was the Rājputs who had to bear the brunt of the fighting and of the losses. In the light of imperial policy, however, the rājās must have got the impression that they were being used merely as cannon fodder, and that this formed part of a greater scheme to weaken and finally to destroy them as undesirable "heathens." Mahābat Khān, well aware of the discontent in his ranks, made a secret pact of mutual forbearance with the Afghāns. Furious, Aurangzēb sent Shujā'at Khān who treated the Rājputs with insolent contempt as "janglīs" (barbarians). They learned that after the crossing of the Indus, when they would be surrounded by Muslims on every side, he intended to bring them to reason. As a gesture of defiance<sup>5</sup> the desperate rājās saluted Karan Singh, the most desperate of their circle, as "emperor of the jungle."<sup>6</sup> When Shujā'at Khān crossed the river, they lagged behind, and Karan Singh began to destroy the ferry boats in the rear of the general. Mahābat Khān, too, refused to cooperate. Shujā'at Khān's army was cut up in the Karāpā Pass in March, 1674. Aurangzēb himself had to proceed to the Afghān theatre of war in order to save the desperate situation and had to postpone his measures against the Rājput princes.

<sup>1</sup> 42, IV; 186, variis locis.

<sup>2</sup> As his later portraits prove, Karan Singh's eldest son and successor Anūp Singh was still a very young man at the time of his accession to the throne and in his best years when he died. As observed on p. 44 note 6, he must have been born shortly after Karan Singh's visit to Bikānēr 1647. But Banmālīdās was the son of a (Muslim?) concubine whom Karan Singh had probably kept during his long absence in the field. Banmālīdās, thus, must have been considerably older and may have cherished the hope of being adopted in absence of legitimate children or—later—of removing them somehow. When these hopes failed, he tried to avail himself of Aurangzēb's anti-Hindi policy in order to obtain the crown. 186, III.

<sup>3</sup> The Kiyant does not mention the year of Karan Singh's death, but the Gazetteer (164, p. 38) concludes, on implication, that he died in 1669. However, Ferishta mentions Karan Singh several years later in the Deccan, but without any title, and the Pāndityadarpana of Udayachandra gives the 6th June, 1674 as the date of his death. From this we much conclude that in 1669 he was deposed, a not surprising development after what had already happened three years earlier at Daulatābād.

<sup>4</sup> 72, II, p. 30 f.

<sup>5</sup> 186, III, p. 216 ff.; 95a.

<sup>6</sup> i.e. as rebel guerilla leader and thus the official scapegoat.



After this defiant act Karan Singh was summoned from Bikānēr, whither he had retired, to the imperial court. But the presence of his gigantic sons, Pādam Singh and Keśri Singh<sup>1</sup> (Pl. VI), averted a plot of Banmālīdās to assassinate him. After all, the Mughal emperors knew that their Rājput soldiers were difficult vassals, no less indomitable towards their overlords than towards the enemy. A spectacular massacre of men who had helped him to the throne, in open durbār, was certainly not advisable under the circumstances. Thus Aurangzēb preferred to send the old hero to Aurangābād. His name appears for the last time, as a simple mansabdār, by the side of his son "Rāo." Anūp Singh, among the officers of Khān Jahān,<sup>2</sup> in the battle with the Bijāpur forces under 'Abd-ul-Kārūn Khān, near Sholapur. Soon afterwards he died, almost seventy years old, on the 6th June, 1674.<sup>3</sup>

In Bikānēr the situation was chaotic. For some time the emperor hesitated to come to a decision on the future of the state. Karan Singh's eldest son, Anūp Singh (Pl. I), had not been implicated in the "jangaldar emperor" affair, as at that time he had been at Jodhpur as de facto ruler, whether as deputy of Jaswant Singh or in what other capacity is not known.<sup>4</sup> As regent for his father he at last foiled an attempt of Banmālīdās to obtain possession of the state, and was, after a personal audience with the emperor, installed as ruler on condition that he contributed a strong Rājput contingent to a great expedition against Bijāpur (1674-76).<sup>5</sup> He distinguished himself at Sholapur<sup>6</sup> and after Karan Singh's death was raised to the rank of rājā (1679).<sup>7</sup>

But the crisis had merely been postponed. Aurangzēb had not yet abandoned his plans. When Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur died in 1678 in Afghānistān, he seized the rājā's family and handed over the state to Indra Singh of Nāgaūr.<sup>8</sup> At the same time Bikānēr was granted to Banmālīdās, and to Udaipur humiliating orders were sent which rānā Rāj Singh could not accept. But the Rāthors succeeded after tremendous sacrifices in rescuing the young heir-apparent, Ajit Singh, from the very heart of the imperial capital, and started on a guerilla war. Indra Singh was deposed and Mārwar occupied by Mughal troops. At the same time Bahādūr Singh of Shekhāvātī (Western Jaipur State) was deposed and Khandela occupied by the Mughals.<sup>9</sup> An army was massed also against Udaipur. But the occupation of Mārwar proved as exhausting as the fighting on the Afghān frontier. The war against Udaipur almost cost Aurangzēb his throne<sup>10</sup>; and in the Deccan the military situation so deteriorated that Aurangzēb was soon forced to concentrate his whole attention on the war against the Marāthas. Anūp Singh temporized. He received Banmālīdās at Bikānēr with all politeness and started bargaining. Isolated, Banmālīdās soon declared himself satisfied with only half of the state, but before he could get even that, Anūp Singh had him poisoned by a slave girl.

During this crisis the whole west and northwest of the state had been lost. The Bhattis and Johiyās had rebelled, and Pugal had been taken by rāval Amar Singh of Jaisalmer. But Anūp Singh succeeded in overcoming these difficulties, and the fort of Anūpgarh<sup>11</sup> was constructed to control the Western Ghaggar Valley. Aurangzēb was forced to abandon his schemes against the Rājputs, and again acknowledged Anūp Singh as rājā of a kingdom which included not only the present frontiers of the state, but also Malot, Sirsa and Fatihābād in the Panjāb, and Phalodi in the southwest.

Anūp Singh went back to the Deccan, and for the next twenty years fought in all the endless imperial campaigns there. In 1681 he was commander of Aurangābād<sup>12</sup>, the provincial capital of the Deccan; in the next year he fought with the Marāthas near Sātārā<sup>13</sup>; Pādam Singh had already in 1674 been seriously wounded in an encounter with them in the Tapti and had been killed in 1682<sup>14</sup>. In 1686 the rājā took part in the last siege and capture of Bijāpur, the capital of the 'Ādilshāhī kingdom, and was raised to the rank of mansabdār of 5,000.<sup>15</sup> In 1687 he led the decisive assault on the fort of Golconda, the

<sup>1</sup> Probably this plot had been hatched out much earlier and was introduced by the bards in this connection for the sake of dramatisation, as Keśri Singh was then already dead. <sup>2</sup> 72, II, p. 41. <sup>3</sup> 193.

<sup>4</sup> 193 mentions him as "lord" of Jodhpur. According to 222, II, p. 983 f. Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur was then in disgrace, like Karan Singhji.

<sup>5</sup> The records of these years are in a hopeless confusion. The sequence of events as reconstructed here can claim only the highest probability.

<sup>6</sup> 72, II, p. 40 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> 186, V, p. 268 ff.; 222, II, p. 990 ff., etc.

<sup>9</sup> 222, III, p. 1388 ff.

<sup>10</sup> The rebellion of prince Akbar 1681, 42, IV, p. 248 ff.

<sup>11</sup> 164, p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> 72, II, p. 56.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>14</sup> 164, pp. 42-44.

<sup>15</sup> 222, II, p. 1136 f.; 72, II, p. 76.



capital of the Qutb Shāhī kings, and was made a mahārājā. He then played a prominent role in the pacification of the Carnatic. In 1689 he took Adoni, the residence of Sidī Mas'ūd, the former regent and last defender of that part of the 'Ādilshāhī state which lay in the South between Hyderabad and Mysore; in 1690 he took Sunker. His last years he spent as governor of Adoni and he died there in 1698.<sup>1</sup>

Anūp Singh was the greatest ruler of Bikānēr after Rāi Singh. As the latter had saved the state from Māldeo of Jodhpur, Anūp Singh saved it from Aurangzēb. He was not only a brave soldier and excellent general like most of his family, but also a great diplomat and scholar. His reign marked the apogee of another century of cultural evolution under the impact of Mughal civilization. During this time the rājās had spent much more time at the imperial court or with the imperial armies. Since Jahāngīr's later years Mughal manners, art, and luxuries had become a fashion with the Rajput aristocracy. In Bikānēr the change had set in early in the 17th century. The fort and extensions (fig. 36) to the palace constructed at Bikānēr during the last years of Rāi Singh, under Sūr Singh and in the first half of Karan Singh's reign, follow the architectural style of the "Red Palace" at Āgra and of Fatehpur Sikrī. This style was also employed, in an enriched form, for the mausolea of Karan Singh and Anūp Singh at Devikund (fig. 53). But in Karan Singh's fort gates and durbār hall, in the Anūp Mahal Chowk of the Fort and the Anūp Sāgar Gardens, the Shāhjahān style is victorious (fig. 33, 75, 35). Already Rāi Singh was portrayed by Mughal painters; Karan Singh probably employed them during his stay in the Deccan; and Anūp Singh not only collected South Indian bronzes<sup>2</sup> and Mughal, Persian, Turkish and Deccani miniatures,<sup>3</sup> but transferred to Bikānēr a whole set of Mughal painters, under whose influence the local Rājput style was more and more transformed into a "Mughal-Rājput" manner. Mughal carpets and arms had been introduced by Rāi Singh. Anūp Singh had excellent weapons in the finest Mughal cut-steel and enamel work. The Mughal court costume was, of course, introduced, at least for men. Bardic literature slowly lost its dominating position. Though the heroic ballads of the charans continued to flourish, the time of the extravagant gifts had gone. The chief work of the early 17th century is the Bel Granth of Cholūjī.<sup>4</sup> The Jain Sūris also lost most of their influence in the reign of Sūr Singh. On the other hand Hindu priests and learned pandits sought at Bikānēr a refuge from Aurangzēb's persecutions. Thus Mudgala, the author of Karnavilāsa, and Dinakara Bhatta, the probable author of the Sāhityakalpadruma, were the protégés of Karan Singh.<sup>5</sup> Anūp Singh maintained quite a staff of poets and scholars, including Anantabhatta, Bhadrarāma, Bhavabhattarāya, Manirāma Dikshita, Vaidyanātha, Rāmabhatta, Nilakantha Chaturdhara, Vitthala Krishna, and Udayachandra.<sup>6</sup> He himself wrote many Sanskrit works and was also interested in astronomy.<sup>7</sup>

### *Bikānēr in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries*

As the rulers of Bikānēr had been among the first Rājputs to support the Mughals, they were also among the last to desert them. For twenty one years more they garrisoned the Deccan front, until it would have been sheer lunacy to remain loyal any longer to a government which was fast breaking up. In some measure this loyalty to a lost cause may have been due to the early deaths of Anūp Singh's next two successors, Sarūp Singh (1698-1700) who died soon<sup>8</sup> under suspicious circumstances and his younger brother, Sujān Singh (1700-1736; fig. 84). The other consideration must have been the old antagonism with Jodhpur. Since Mewār had been liberated, Ajit Singh of Mārwar, now the son-in-law of the Rana, became bolder. In 1700 he made a surprise attack on Jodhpur but was soon forced to flee before Sultān Ā'zam Shāh to Jālor. When, however, in 1703 the Marāthas cut the communications between

<sup>1</sup> According to Ferishta Anūp Singh died shortly after 1690; but this is contradicted by the Bikānēri tradition and the dated miniatures at Lalgarh Palace. <sup>2</sup> Now housed in the Kārkhāna Gangā-Jal, Bikānēr Fort.

<sup>3</sup> According to the old entries on the reverse of the paintings. <sup>4</sup> 164, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> 192; 190. <sup>6</sup> 189; 191; 192; 193; 194; 195; 134.

<sup>7</sup> His astronomical instruments are preserved in the Anūp Singh Sanskrit Library. Another old set is found in Būndī palace. The most famous observatories, of course, are those of Sawai Jai Singh at Jaipur, Delhi, Benares and Ujjain.

<sup>8</sup> The accounts of this period again are confused and contradictory.



Northern India and the Deccan, he returned, killed Muhkam Singh of Nāgaur in the battle of Dunārā and was acknowledged lord of Mertā by the weary emperor.<sup>1</sup> From Nāgaur he took Bikānēr<sup>2</sup> with the connivance of the Bidavat party, in the hope of finding a convenient base in the desert. But to his disappointment he was not received as the liberator of the Rāthors, and had to abandon his conquest. In the meantime Aurangzēb had died, and Bahādur Shāh (1707-12) inflicted a crushing defeat on Ajit Singh. However, the new emperor had soon to concentrate his attention on the civil war with his brothers, and he acknowledged the Mārwar kingdom in 1710, after Ajit had taken Jodhpur and entered into a defensive alliance with Sawāi Jai Singh (1693-1743) of Amber. This settlement did not last long. During the civil wars and the brief reigns, which followed the death of Bahādur Shāh, Ajit Singh threw off the last vestiges of imperial control and took the Mughal fortress Ajmer. In 1714 however, he was forced into abject surrender by the expedition of Husain 'Alī Khān.<sup>3</sup> Yet he recovered, thanks to the party quarrels within the imperial government, and became, together with Sawāi Jai Singh, one of the leading personalities at Delhi and even governor of Gujarāt.

Soon new quarrels<sup>4</sup> arose, which led successively to the assassination of Farrukhsiyar in 1718, the destruction of the Bārha Sayyid dictators in 1720-22, and the disgrace, rebellion and murder by his own son Abhai Singh of Ajit Singh in 1724. The provinces now slipped finally from the control of Delhi. Sujān Singh (fig. 84), now grown up, thought it wiser to return home in 1719. For Abhai Singh of Jodhpur proved a second Māldeo, intriguing with the discontented nobles of Bikānēr and even trying to kidnap the young rājā. Fortunately Abhai Singh's energies were for the next few years diverted to Delhi and then to Gujarāt, the governorship of which rich province he held for the Mughals from 1727 to 1730. Nevertheless Sujān Singh's difficulties must have been considerable. The return of the Rāthor army from the Deccan created the well-known problems of demobilisation, unrest of the unemployed thakurs and soldiers, loss of the corresponding imperial pay and pressure on the already overcrowded fiefs. This led to the bloody insurrections of the Khāndalot Rājputs, the Bhattis and the Johiyās, which in 1730 forced Sujān Singh to reconquer Bhatner and Nohar. Thus the invasion of Bikānēr in 1733 by Abhai Singh of Jodhpur and his brother Bakhat Singh, the new lord of Nāgaur, proved a blessing in disguise. Lack of water and supplies, and the intervention of Rānā Sangrām II of Udaipur, forced the invaders to a hurried retreat. But immediately afterwards the internal tension was again made apparent by the rebellion of prince Zorāwar Singh against his father, and by a plot, which was quashed only at the last moment, of the Sānkhālā killadar to surrender Bikānēr fort into the hands of Bakhat Singh.

After Sujān Singh's death in 1735 the growing jealousy between Abhai Singh and Bakhat Singh resulted in a curious volte-face. After his expulsion from Gujarāt by Sarbuland Khān in 1730, Abhai Singh had become increasingly addicted to opium, so that Bakhat Singh began to dream of occupying the gaddi of Jodhpur himself. For this purpose he needed the backing of Bikānēr. In fact both Bikānēr and Jaipur, faced with the problem of Delhi, the neighbourhood of the unruly Jats of Bharatpur, and the advance of the Marāthas into Bundelkhand and Mālwa, were interested in a civil war which would divide Mārwar and thus preserve the balance of power between the Rājput states. Through the next twenty years, the reign of Zorāwar Singh (1736-1745; fig. 88) and the first years (1745-1753) of Gaj Singh, this struggle, with its internal repercussions, was to dominate the history of Bikānēr. Zorāwar Singh could not trust Bakhat Singh, but, after the latter had captured Mertā in 1739, he sent an army to attack Jodhpur. Suddenly Bakhat Singh changed front, came to an agreement with Abhai Singh, and both besieged Bikānēr. It was the most serious attack which Bikānēr had yet sustained, and the defence of its fort was heroic. Nevertheless Zorāwar Singh had to appeal to Sawāi Jai Singh of Amber-Jaipur, who relieved him by invading Mārwar. Bakhat Singh again changed front, and the bloody battle of Gangwāna in 1741 forced Abhai Singh to abandon the siege of Bikānēr. Zorāwar Singh now personally

<sup>1</sup> 42, IV, p. 304; 222, II, p. 1012.

<sup>2</sup> 164, p. 46 f.

<sup>3</sup> 42, IV, p. 333; 222, II, p. 1020.

<sup>4</sup> For the following paragraphs, besides 222, esp. 120; 187; 178, and a number of documents published by the latter.



visited Jaipur, and the great Sawāi Jai Singh lent him the necessary help to subdue the refractory thākurs, especially those of Mahājan and Churū.

During this campaign Zorāwar Singh fell ill, some days after the capture of Hissar (1745), and his death was the signal for another war. The thākur of Bukarka and Mahta Bakhtāwar Singh had raised to the throne his cousin, Gaj Singh (1745-1787; fig. 85), who was to be the most important ruler of the state after Rāi Singh and Anūp Singh. Again Bikānēr was besieged in 1747 by Abhai Singh, in alliance with the discontented nobles led by Gaj Singh's brother, Amar Singh. Again Gaj Singh retaliated by supporting the indefatigable intriguer, Bakhat Singh. But the political chessboard was no longer the same. Sawāi Jai Singh of Jaipur had in 1743 been followed by Sawāi Isrī Singh and Abhai Singh had in 1748 been replaced by his son Rām Singh. Other allies were drawn into the struggle: the Mughals under Bakhshī Salābat Khān,<sup>1</sup> the Marāthas who had already overrun Central India, Gujarāt, Mālwa and Mewār and who were now penetrating Mārwar and the neighbourhood of Delhi, and finally Rāval Akhai Singh of Jaisalmer who tried to extend his control via Bhikampur into the South West of Bikānēr.<sup>2</sup> The battles of Sūriyabās and Pipāra in 1750 were indecisive, but at Mertā in 1752 and 1753 Rām Singh was twice decisively beaten, and ended his days as a refugee at Jaipur. In 1752 Bakhat Singh became at last mahārājā of Jodhpur, to be poisoned one year later and to be succeeded by his son Bijai Singh.

The civil war in Mārwar had come to an end, but the country was so ruined by its ravages and by the depredations of the Marāthas, that it ceased to be a danger to Bikānēr. Henceforth Bikānēr policy consisted in maintaining the balance between Jaipur and Jodhpur and in protecting its rear against Jaisalmer and the rising state of the Dāūdputra Afghāns of Bahāwalpur.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand the long wars had weakened the authority of the mahārājas over their nobles, as every party had tried to find allies among the discontented of their neighbours. Mārwar was being disrupted by the feud of Bijai Singh with the Champavats over the Pokaran fief; in Jaipur Shekhāvati and Mācheri (Alwar) were breaking away; Mewār was torn first by the civil war between Ari and Ratan Singh and then by that between the Chondavats and Saktavats. In the north Sikhs and Jats were in rebellion. Gaj Singh, too, had to struggle with revolt after revolt, at Mahājan, Bhikampur, Bhadram, Rāvatsar, Bhatner, Sirsa, and elsewhere.

Thus there was developed by the leading courts a policy of cautious alliances cemented by multi-lateral matrimonial ties. In 1751 Gaj Singh visited Pokaran in the company of Bijai Singh, in 1754 he paid with the latter a visit to Sawāi Mādho Singh at Jaipur. In 1770-1 he went with Bijai Singh to the famous Krishna sanctuary at Nāthdwāra and tried to settle a dispute over Godwāra between his friend and Rānā Rāj Singh II of Udaipur. In 1751 he settled the quarrel with Jaisalmer over Bhikampur by marrying Rāval Akhai Singh's daughter, Chand Kaur; at Jaipur he married Fateh Kaur and Phul Kaur, the daughters of the Rājawat of Kamba and of the thākur of Jhilaya; in 1753 he married a princess of Sirohi; in 1768 prince Sawāi Prithvī Singh, Sawāi Mādho Singh's son, was married at Bikānēr to Gaj Singh's daughter, Sardār Kaur. Thus in 1766 Gaj Singh kept out of the war between Bijai Singh, now in alliance with the Jats of Bharatpur, and Sawāi Mādho Singh; after the latter's death he helped Sawāi Prithvī Singh to obtain an honourable peace. But towards the North and North-West of Bikānēr state conditions were chaotic. Gaj Singh's help to the Mughals in 1752 proved ineffective. His occupation of Hissar<sup>4</sup> in the struggle between Safdar Jang of Oudh and Ghāzī-ud-dīn Khān brought him the pompous title "Sri Rāj-Rājeśvar Mahārāj-Adhirāj Mahārājā Siromani" and the right of coinage,<sup>5</sup> but the cession of the Panjāb to Ahmad Shāh Durrānī forced him again to abandon Hissar. Already in the same year he had to suppress the unrest in Shekhāvati and the Bhatti country arising from the Sikh guerilla war against the Afghāns. In 1760 Bhatner had again to be subjected. In 1765 Rājgarh had to be founded as a stronghold to keep down

<sup>1</sup> 187, I, p. 310 ff.      <sup>2</sup> 3; 118; 122.      <sup>3</sup> 203.

<sup>4</sup> The grant of Hissar-i Fērōza was renewed 1762 by Shāh 'Ālam II (31, p. 17), but without any practical consequences; 156, p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> 237.



the North-East of the state, in 1768 an expedition against Sirsa and Fatihābād proved necessary ; in 1773 another Bhatti revolt had to be chastized (fig. 76), and in 1783 a fort was begun at Nohar to control that province. At the same time the feuds between the chieftains of the Dāūdputras entailed a prolonged war on the North-Western frontier over Anūpgarh and other forts in the Ghaggar Valley.

Gaj Singh's last years were embittered by a quarrel with his son Rāj Singh, who rebelled in 1775, lived six years as a refugee in the sanctuary of Karniji at Deshnoke and at last escaped to Jodhpur. In 1785 he returned, a sick man, on the intervention of Bijai Singh, and was made a prisoner by his own brothers. In 1788 Gaj Singh also fell ill, and on his deathbed formally made Rāj Singh his successor. But the sick prince died only two days after his accession and left the throne to a boy, Pratap Singh, who a short time after also died.<sup>1</sup>

Sūrat Singh, Rāj Singh's brother and regent for Pratāp Singh, a strong personality, soon became mahārājā (1787-1828 ; fig. 82).<sup>2</sup> After having re-established amicable relations with the mahārājās of Jaipur and Jodhpur, who were not prepared to start another war in favour of Sūrat Singh's discontented brothers, he resumed the subjection of the restless North. In 1799 Sūratgarh was founded as another stronghold in the Ghaggar Valley, and Fatehgarh was retaken and fortified, despite a temporary defeat at the hand of the British military adventurer, George Thomas, lord of Hissar.<sup>3</sup> In 1801-02 the Western Ghaggar Valley was recovered from the Dāūdputras of Bahāwalpur,<sup>4</sup> and in 1804-1805 Bhatner was besieged and transformed into another royal stronghold under the name of Hanumāngarh.

But then, for the last time, Bikānēr was drawn into a war with Jodhpur. On the death of Bijai Singh in 1793, his grandson, Bhīm Singh, had seized the throne of Jodhpur and removed all other rivals.<sup>5</sup> Only one cousin, Mān Singh, was rescued by Bijai Singh's favourite concubine and taken into the fort of Jālor which held out for eleven years, until the mahārāja's death in 1803. Now Mān Singh was raised to the throne, which he was to retain until 1843 through the most amazing vicissitudes. The Champavat party discovered a posthumous heir of Bhīm Singh, Dhonkal Singh, who found the support of Sawāi Jagat Singh II of Jaipur. In 1805-06 Jagat Singh and his ally Sūrat Singh besieged the almost impregnable fort of Jodhpur. Mān Singh was reduced to extremities. But the seven months' siege demoralized the besiegers, the Jodhpur thākurs went over to Mān Singh, and the Bikānēr and Jaipur armies returned home. During the retreat the Jaipur army was badly defeated by Amīr Khān, the dread Pindāri leader whom Mān Singh had succeeded in winning to his cause. In 1808 the Pindāri treacherously massacred the thākurs of Dhonkal Singh's party at Nāgaur, devastated Jaipur and led a Jodhpur army before Bikānēr. The Jodhpuris were anything but enthusiastic and the siege began half-heartedly and was at last abandoned.<sup>6</sup> In 1813 Aishji,<sup>7</sup> the influential Nāthū yogī guru who had helped Mān Singh to the throne, reconciled him with Sūrat Singh, but was soon afterwards disposed of by Amīr Khān. Mān Singh, badly shocked, was to remain the "insane" prisoner of Amīr Khān until the British restored him in 1817.

The siege had led to another crisis in Bikānēr State, so that Sūrat Singh thought of obtaining British help.<sup>8</sup> The refractory thākurs had to be subjected one by one by the loyal Amar Chand, whose guerilla tactics had so much helped Sūrat Singh during the siege of his capital. After his cruel execution as a "traitor" Sūrat Singh discovered too late that he had murdered his best supporter. When in 1816 another rebellion, backed by the notorious Amīr Khān, broke out, he asked for British help again. In 1818 the treaty of alliance was concluded, as with other Rājput states, and a British force restored the authority of the mahārājā.

While the Rājput rulers had spent the last century quarrelling over bits of their desert country, the Mughal Empire had become exhausted and had disintegrated in the hands of "vassal" adventurers.

<sup>1</sup> Sūrat Singh has been accused of having poisoned his ward and of having removed the latter's mother under disgraceful circumstances.

<sup>2</sup> 164, p. 73 ; 222, II, p. 1138 ff. ; 142, p. 114 ff. ; p. 77 ff., p. 111 ff. ; 234, p. 126 ff. ; 203, p. 72. <sup>3</sup> 48 ; 221.

<sup>4</sup> 203, p. 43, p. 49 ff. ; p. 72. <sup>5</sup> 222, II, p. 1077 ff. <sup>6</sup> 67, I, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> According to 19 in 1815. The Jodhpur Museum possesses many portraits of Aishji (Āijī) Nāthji and Mān Singh.

<sup>8</sup> 20.



The Marāthas had built up a Hindu Empire, but only succeeded in accomplishing the economic ruin of the sub-continent. The Afghāns had achieved the same in the North-West. Then the British came; and brought peace and efficient administration. That the impact of the West would eventually cause the final destruction of the past and inaugurate a new future, nobody could then foresee. The tremors of the old wars and rebellions needed half a century to subside in Rājputānā, but the frontier quarrels between the states were settled one by one, the relations between the rulers and their nobles clarified, and the country began to recover from long devastation. More important was the discovery through the successive British missions to Bīkānēr and the travels of her rulers beyond the boundaries of the state of a new, wider world. In 1806 Mountstuart Elphinstone passed through Bīkānēr on his way to Kābul<sup>1</sup>; in 1818 General Alner crushed the revolts in the North East; in 1835, after Ratan Singhjihad in 1829 invaded Jaisālmer and in 1830 subjected Pūgal, Capt. Boileau visited Bīkānēr and Jaisālmer in order to settle the frontier between both states<sup>2</sup>; Col Sutherland came in 1847 as agent of the Governor-General. In 1828 Ratan Singh became mahārājā, and visited Hardwār in 1831, Rewā and Alwar in 1836, Udaipur in 1839, and Delhi in 1842. During the Mutiny (1857), mahārājā Sardār Singh (1851-1872) fought by the side of the British in the Panjab<sup>3</sup>. British experts were summoned, and slowly the time became ripe for the great reforms of mahārājā Dūngar Singhjī (1872-87)<sup>4</sup> and Gangā Singhjī (1887-1944<sup>5</sup>).

Indeed, reforms were more than overdue. Later Rājput culture had reached its zenith in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Already under Shāhjahān and Aurangzēb the Rājput princes had assimilated most of the highly refined Mughal court civilization. When the empire disintegrated, they became its cultural heirs. They took into their service the architects, masons, painters, weavers, jewellers, armourers, musicians and dancing girls of the Mughals. Under Sawāi Jai Singh and Sawāi Iśrī Singh Jaipur civilization became essentially Mughal, and the same happened at Jodhpur under Ajit, Abhai and Bakhat Singh, and in Bīkānēr under Sujān, Zorāwar and Gaj Singhjī. Under Sawāi Mādho Singh at Jaipur, Bijai Singh at Jodhpur and during the later years of Gaj Singhjī at Bīkānēr the local spirit again began to break through the crust of Mughal court tradition and became supreme under Sawāi Pratāp Singh II at Jaipur. Mān Singh at Jodhpur and Sūrat Singh at Bīkānēr. After the Pax Britannica had replenished the exhausted coffers of the Rājput rulers, and prevented further wastage of these funds in war, late Rājput civilisation flowered in a last overwhelming exuberance, only to degenerate after some decades and to ebb away between 1870-1900.

At first these cultural changes had been much more modest at Bīkānēr than at Jaipur or Jodhpur. Not only was Sujān Singh the last of the Rājput rulers to return from Mughal service at the Deccan front, but adaptation to economic conditions was much more difficult in the desert kingdom, and until the civil war between Abhai and Bakhat Singh the political situation had been even worse. Apart from the chhattris of Sujān and Zorāwar Singh at Devikund, in the style of the Kaga tombs at Jodhpur, and for the already old-fashioned monument to Purohit Jagrāmjī in the Bīkānēr Fort enclosure, the small Sujān Mahal and some additions to the Zenāna are the only architectural monuments worthy of mention. Much more important was the output of paintings, which were partly a continuation of the Anūp Singh school and partly a rather nervous variety of the contemporary Mughal style. Best of them are the charming scenes of Zenāna life on the doors of the Sujān Mahal (fig. 37-38).

A new impetus came with the reign of Gaj Singhjī. This very cultured, and for his time widely-travelled ruler was not only a successful statesman, but also a great patron of the arts. Most Bīkānēr buildings of the 18th century are due to his initiative: the new fortification of Bīkānēr town, Rājgarh, the fort of Nohar, the hunting seat of Gajner, and especially the great extension of Bīkānēr palace. It is characteristic that this extension was devoted almost solely to the Zenāna. Gaj Singh, the number of whose offspring was proverbial,<sup>6</sup> was certainly fond of women though in this cult of the zenāna he merely followed the ideals of his time. Of course, other buildings were not forgotten, but most of the new

<sup>1</sup> 67, I, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 35; 142, p. 115 f.

<sup>3</sup> 212, p. 31; 142, p. 116 f; 22; 181, p. 290 ff.

<sup>4</sup> 31, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> 31; 156, p. 104; 31; 164; 160.

<sup>6</sup> 142, p. 114; 222, II, p. 1137.



buildings were additional quarters, with halls, gardens and garden houses, a miniature open swimming-pool and a hammām for his ladies, and above all private rooms for himself in the Gaj Mandir (fig. 40-42). For this last purpose the old private mansion of Rāi Singh and Anūp Singh was transformed into a fairy world of mirrors, gold stucco, mosaics, marble, and opulent wall- and ceiling-paintings—the work of an architect engaged during the rajā's visit to Jaipur and of Mughal refugees from Delhi and Lahore. The old staterooms of Karan (fig. 35) and Anūp Singh were also redecorated. Painting and fashions in costume and armour revived under the influence of Mughal refugees. The pomp of contemporary weddings and other festivals has been described in detail by the kiyant. Literature flourished, though the bardic element more and more disappeared before a ritualist and theological and a more popular erotic literature. The highwater mark was reached in the reign of Sūrat Singh. Court fashion (fig. 82) turned from the dignified to the extravagant. Court art achieved its consummation in the enlarged and renovated Anūp Mahal, opulent, yet pleasing and well-balanced, with its gold and scarlet gesso-reliefs, Jaipur glass (fig. 45 ff.) mosaics and painted and varnished doors. But this luxurious architecture is of a nervous restlessness, and in the wall- and ceiling-paintings and the painted stucco reliefs of gods and goddesses and attendant maidservants, the popular Rājput style breaks through. The same is true of the miniature paintings, with their flat forms, musical lines and strong colour contrasts. On the whole the output was much less than under Gaj Singh. Revenues<sup>1</sup> were dwindling and much of them had to be spent on fortifications, the southern extension of Bikānēr Fort, the construction of Sūratgarh, the completion of Hanumāngark and Nohar Fort, and the protective wall round the Deshnok sanctuary. During his reign was built the first great Hindu temple for many centuries, the Dhunināth, in the "Court Mansion" style, since developed at Jaipur, Jodhpur, and elsewhere. It was in fact a time of religious revival, especially of the popular features of local Hindu religion. The cult of Karnijī reached its greatest popularity, and a whole long-forgotten pantheon came into the foreground of the pictures.

Under Sūrat Singh's successors art began to lose its verve, architecture became dull, and painting rigid and lifeless (fig. 48.) Artists had even to be imported from Jaipur and Jodhpur. On the other hand European elements, at first quaint and misunderstood and reminiscent of the Italo-Byzantine products of 16th century Russia, began to appear (fig. 52). With the reforms of Dūngar Singhjī and the early reign of Gangā Singhjī an immense building activity set in which contented itself in imitating the old forms. Painting, however, more sensitive to the living breath of life, collapsed, and industrial art was only temporarily revitalised by the efforts of Col. T. T. Hendley,<sup>2</sup> the first art reformer of modern India. However, since the peace of 1818, building activity had revived not only in the addition of further storeys to the towering Fort Palace, but also in the Rāj-Ratanbihārjī, Jagannāth, Bhīnasar and Sheobarī Temples, the Sardār Vilās Palace at Gajner, and many rich private houses in the town.

But as so often in human history, the growth of the general economic and social structure of the state had not kept pace with this flourishing development of upper-class culture. The natural poverty of the Thar set inexorable limits to economic development with the methods then known. But whereas the standard of luxury rose far beyond that of Mughal times, the additional income from the trade diverted, as in Chauhān times, from the chaotic Panjāb to the desert routes, could not make up for the loss of the Mughal military revenues. And the support given from outside to discontented or ambitious nobles weakened the Bikānēr administration not less than that of Jodhpur, Jaipur or Udaipur. The ensuing misery, especially in famine years, again led to robbery and rebellion, punitive expeditions, more destruction, more unrest, more disintegration. The multiplication of forts and fortified posts planned by Gaj Singhjī and Sūrat Singhjī helped to maintain the royal control, but could not extirpate the root of the evil, which required more developed administrative and technical methods. This weakness, then general in India, paved the way to British suzerainty, and thus made possible acquaintance with new methods. Thus the reforms of mahārāja Dūngar Singhjī and of his great successor Gangā Singhjī found at last the way out of a seemingly hopeless impasse.

<sup>1</sup> 142, p. 114 ff.; 3, 170.      <sup>2</sup> 111, cp. p. 84 note 1.  
35, p. 17 ff.; 212, p. 7, p. 20 f.; 164, p. 146 ff.; 183, pls. 35 ff.



## IV. THE ART OF BĪKĀNĒR

### 1. *The Foundations of Rājput Art*

The belief that a nation's art grows out of the unfathomed depths of the folk spirit alone, belongs, like the parallel concept that nations are unaffected by foreign conquests, migration and cultural influences, to the myths of a crude and childish nationalism. Children accept the lessons of their parents and teachers, and even adults feed for long on the ideas and ideals of others following the traditions of their milieu, before they are mature enough to evolve their own concept of the world and of life, and to hand this on to others. Similarly, nations and races accept, then adapt, art styles inherited from older or neighbouring civilizations and peoples before they develop their own national art; and even then the vicissitudes of such styles may be strange, deflected or broken by the ideologies which arise from social clashes and religious change. In the context of Indian history the Rājputs were a young nation. Even the tribes indigenous since pre-Christian times had been for the most part half-nomads, and the Hūna-Gurjara, Arab and Muslim-Turkish invasions had time and again over-run such cultural centres as had flourished under outside influence.

Rājput art, therefore, had for many centuries been an adaptation of art styles accepted from more highly civilized neighbours, i.e. the Hindus of Eastern, Central and Southern India. Like the Romanesque art of Mediaeval Europe or the Arab art of the 'Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd caliphates it had, indeed, been a highly successful adaptation in which borrowed late Gupta elements were further developed and reinterpreted in a new spirit and with a new ideal of beauty. The first phase of Rājput art in the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries had been a simple, though often somewhat crude imitation of the late Gupta and Western Chālukya styles<sup>1</sup>; and much of it must have been the work of artisans and masons summoned from Central India, Bengal and the North Western Deccan.<sup>2</sup> With the rise of the Pratihāra dynasty<sup>3</sup> (8th century), however, came new ideals. Instead of the light, urban elegance of the preceding centuries we find a heaviness, earthbound, yet heaven-aspiring, in the massive architectural structures with their short pillars, large-scale sculptural decoration and beehive-like temple spires, in the sculptures with stout, slowly moving bodies and heavy eyes, in the "Central Asian" plait-band ornament, the oppressive accumulation of storeys of pentroofs with their dormer (gavāksha) windows and the strong light contrasts of deeply undercut, but almost flat ornament, like Byzantine or Visigoth church capitals or early Muslim inscription friezes. We find the same attitude in the new vision of the Godhead, full of awe and terrible majesty.

The aristocratic society which came to power under the Cāhamāna, Solankī, Paramāra, Gaharwāda and other kingdoms, differed from that of the Pratihāra empire, as much as the France of Saint Louis from that of Charlemagne, or the Hohenstaufen Frederick II's Germany from that of the early Saxon emperors or the England of the late Angevins from that of Alfred the Great. Not without reason has the art of Mediaeval Northern India been called "horizontal Gothic." The temples<sup>4</sup> which this refined Rājput court society created, vie in beauty with the finest Gothic cathedrals. They were filled with the same mystic symbolism encompassing the lowest depths of being and the ineffable heights of the Divine, organic structures in stone, yet both human and divine. Though their interior could not compare with the loftiness and the mysterious light of the Gothic cathedrals, their exterior sculptures represent the perfection of classic beauty; during the first half of the 12th century, however, they had already developed into an exaggerated elegant mannerism, and during the late 12th century they degenerated rapidly. Already

<sup>1</sup> The switch-over from Gupta to Mediaeval art has so far hardly been studied. However, we can trace at least some monuments: the early temples of Aihole, esp. nos. 7 and 9; the Umā-Maheśvara group (Katachūrī) in the Baroda State Museum; Mandor; and the monuments of Mastūr near Haripur in the Kangrā Valley, Brahmar in Chamba State and the Rāmeśvar at Bhuvaneśvar. The early Chālukya Temple type can be traced in Northern Gujarāt (Lakrodā and Vadnagar) and Kāthiāwār, e.g. (Than, Viśāvēda, Sutrapādā, Kadvār).

<sup>2</sup> In Mastūr and Brahmar this is quite obvious (100).

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Fagēśvar, Mandor, Osiān, Surwāya, Gwālīor, Rodā, Tintoi, Sāmājī, Pātan-Anhilwāda (Baroda State Museum), Modherā (oldest parts), Vadnagar.

<sup>4</sup> See now especially 129.



during the 11th century the ideals of later Rajput art found expression in large simplification of forms and strong rhythmic outline. Into the crude attempt at revival in the 13th century were introduced other elements derived from Rājput folk art and from Sāsāno-Irānian tradition.<sup>1</sup>

The Muslim invasions proved a worse disaster to India than those of the Mongols to the Muslim world, or the Black Death to Europe. Except for a few places of refuge in Western India, especially in Gujarāt, mediaeval North-Indian art was obliterated. Temples were desecrated and demolished, sculptures mutilated, towns and castles razed and artisans massacred or expelled. Whatever direct influence this art was to exercise in later times, it was not that of a living tradition, but as a "classical" model consciously studied and imitated in a later "Renaissance." True, the tradition never died out. In the hands of the Gujarātī "salāts" it has been preserved, as a form merely, up to the present. Forms, prescriptions, rules could be saved. When, however, in the 13th and 14th centuries the Rājputs could preserve a precarious freedom only as robber adventurers of the jungles and hills, when citizens and peasants groaned under the lash and sword of the Turkish conqueror, the free humanism, the delicate sensitiveness, the profound spiritualism of a Golden Age could not survive even in the "Ghetto" secrecy of the private house or behind fortifications<sup>2</sup> liable any day to be transformed into a shambles of blood and smoking ruins. Yet this ossified tradition, preserved and encouraged by the Jain mercantile communities, was to prove the craftsman's link with the past. Nevertheless, both would have been of no avail without the living folk spirit of the Rājputs, which alone could breathe into those embers a new fire of self-confidence and pride, of ideals and ideas; and without the desire to give a visible, tangible expression to these ideals. As soon as the pressure relaxed, this idealism expanded into a fervent mysticism which embraced all the beauties of the world as living symbols of the bliss of the loving Godhead, and eagerly accepted all existing art types—the primitive Rājput folk art, the great ruins of the past, the ossified traditions of the Gujarātī salāts, even the foreign fashions of Muslim and South Indian émigrés—as the raw material with which to express its own glorious vision of beauty, of the reflection and working of the Divine in the visible world.

At first this new Rājput art found expression in crude idols and a clumsy, rustic architecture, with short quadrangular pillars and plain cellas with low doors and roughly corbelled pyramidal steep roofs.<sup>3</sup> But towards the end of the 14th century individual Rājput princes started to summon architects and masons from Gujarāt<sup>4</sup>, and during the first half of the 15th century a conscious "Renaissance" of high mediaeval art was in full swing. This reached its zenith in the immense building activities of Rānā Kūmbha of Chitorgarh, which show Chauhān and Gujarātī Hindu-Jain motifs in religious, Hindu-Muslim in secular and Muslim with Hindu decorative motifs in military architecture, folk-Rājput and Jain types mixed in sculpture and Gujarātī and Jain in painting.

But that enthusiasm which burst through the fetters of ritual into Mīrā Bāi's ecstatic songs of Divine love, was not to be contained by the inherited formulas of architects, masons and painters. The Krishna myth, the stories, symbolic interpretations and lyric elaborations of which had won all hearts, could only occasionally be found in the art of the past. The same was true of the Devī-Māhātmya, the favourite myth of the Great Goddess of Death, always dear to warriors prepared to throw away their lives at the slightest insult to their honour. Old types had to be adapted, reinterpreted, elaborated or borrowed from other art styles. No longer under the spell of tradition artists began to follow their own inspiration. As in the 15th and 16th centuries Muslim art, now an indigenous growth, had adapted Hindu motifs to its own needs, it was natural that the Rājputs, now claiming these motifs for their own use, should modify them again and at the same time take over purely Muslim forms. The result was no

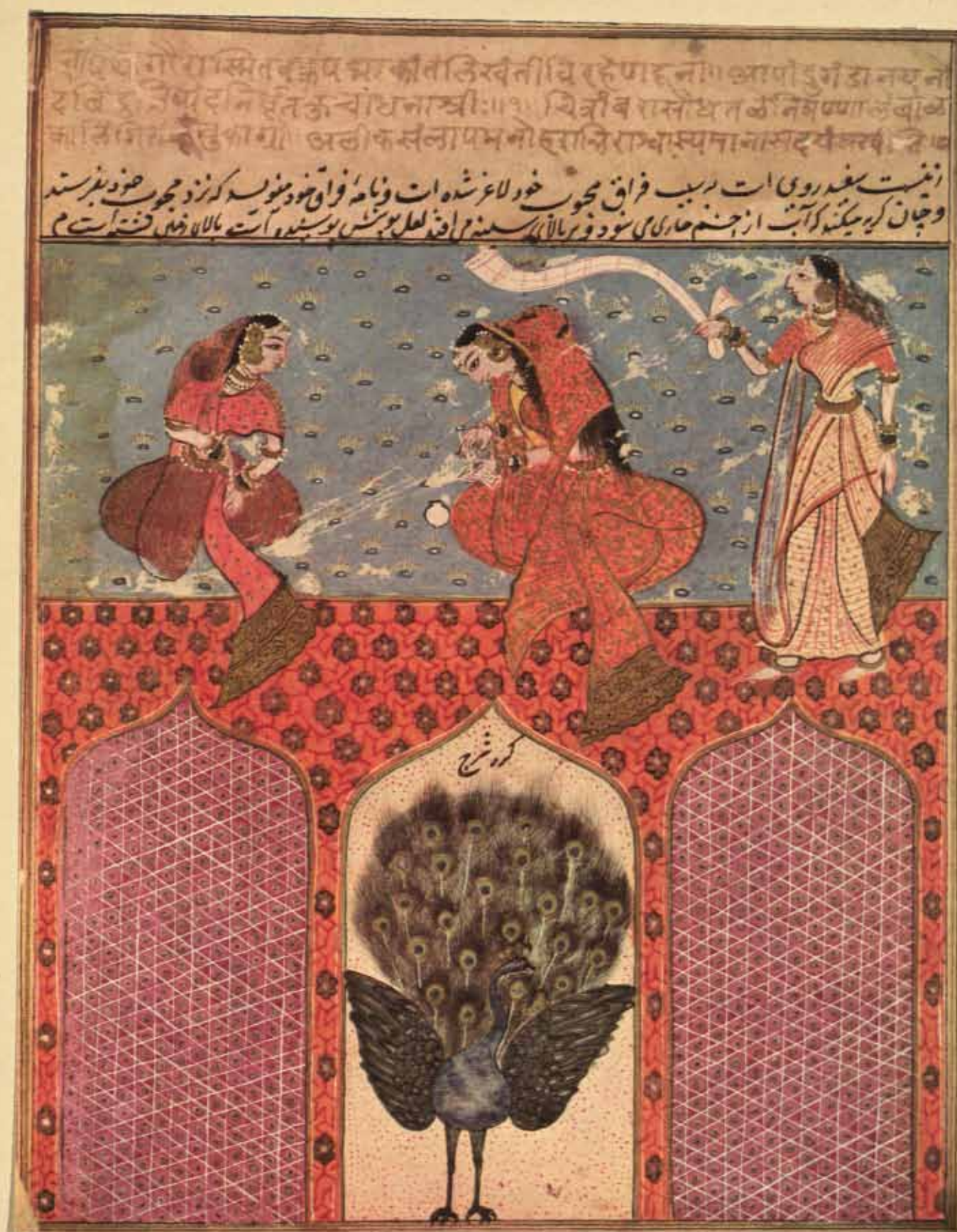
<sup>1</sup> I shall deal with this development in a special paper. It may, however, be observed here that most of these Sāsānian motifs had been of Indian origin; but their "heraldic" formulation differentiates them from Indian art.

<sup>2</sup> All later Rājput states have grown round some natural fortress, an oasis, a high plateau, or an isolated mountain stock enclosing a valley (e.g. Chitorgarh, Rānthambhor, Mt. Abu, Idar, Champaner, Girnar, Sattrūjaya), and these were also the first places of refuge of Hindu art.

<sup>3</sup> The type still survives also in the Marāṭha country; for some examples in the Himālaya cp. 228, 93.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Garur Gyān Chand of Kumāon (cp. the Balīśvar Temple of Champāvat, and the Gujjar Deo of Dwārakāhāt); cp. 91.





DHANASRI RAGINI

Deccani Miniature, Ahmadnagar, ca. 1565-69. Lallgarh Palace, Bikaner.







hotchpotch of styles, but a new art. For this adaptation was selective, remoulding the loans into a uniform new ideal. Rājput ideals then were simple, but intense. The exuberance of Gujarātī architecture was tuned down and Muslim forms were reduced to a mere novel elaboration of parallel Hindu motifs. On the other hand a picturesque and irregular, yet balanced vertical plan was opposed to the regular horizontal lay-out of Muslim palaces; in the temple the plan of the Rājput fort and mansion began to interfere with the mediaeval scheme. The dead forms of Gujarātī sculpture and painting were quickened by the tradition of the Pāliyā (warrior memorial) stones and by Mālwa, Tīmūrid and Deccanī innovations, and filled with an intense life of movement and emotion, stressed by suggestive effects of colour-symbolism. In the middle of the 15th century this new Rājput art had begun to develop, and it flourished through the whole of the 16th and part of the 17th century, when it was "absorbed" by Mughal art, to reappear after the middle of the 18th century.

As a matter of fact this "absorption" by Mughal art meant not the destruction, but a further enrichment of Rājput art. For Mughal art was able to "absorb" Rājput art, merely because it was itself half-Rājput. The court art of the Mughal Emperors had passed through several phases before the emergence of the imperial style. Under Bābur, Humāyūn and in the first years (until *circa* 1570) of Akbar, it was simply a branch of the Tīmūrid-Safavid style of Turkistān and Irān, with its high encaustic-tiled buildings and its fashionable paintings evolved from the Mongol-Chinese tradition of the Il-Khāns. Then the contemporary Indo-Muslim art of Lodī, Delhi, Jaunpur, Bihār, Mālwa and Gujarāt was fused with the Tīmūrid style. But after Akbar's alliances with the Rājput princes and his policy of religious toleration and syncretism, Rājput art conquered the Mughal court, leaving to the other styles no more than a supplementary role. This domination, to which we owe Fatehpur Sikrī, Rohtāsgarh, Ajmer Palace and the older palaces in Agra and Lahore Fort, remained unchallenged until about 1620. In the 17th century another wave of Safavī-Persian fashions was superseded by the art of the declining Deccanī sultanates. This latter had always been so closely interrelated with Rājput art that the transition was hardly felt in architecture whereas in painting it led to the complete domination of the Rājput type. In fact, classic Mughal painting preserved few Persian elements, it was a variety of Deccanī-Rājput pictorial art with a thin veneer of European naturalism. Under these circumstances Mughal court art conquered Rājputānān not as an alien intruder, but merely as a refined and sophisticated variety of the local tradition. Thus it was easily recast into a pure expression of the Rājput spirit when the Mughal empire and its art faded away. In the 18th and 19th centuries Rājput art has the same aesthetic and spiritual ideals as that of the 16th and early 17th centuries. But it has matured. What once had been simple, has become rich and sophisticated, what had been heroic, has become pompous, mysticism has been replaced by a sensuous aestheticism.



## V. THE ARCHITECTURE OF BĪKĀNĒR

### 1. *Temple Architecture*

The beginnings of religious architecture in Bīkānēr State are more or less lost. At Mundā and Pīr Sultān in the Ghaggar Valley Dr. Tessitori discovered traces of the foundations of what he thought might have been Buddhist stūpas.<sup>1</sup> But since the Śaiva and Vaishnava terracotta reliefs found at Pīr Sultān, Rang Mahal and Badopal have turned out to be characteristic Gupta works of the 4th and 5th centuries, it seems more probable that these foundations belonged to pyramidal temples of cruciform plan and decorated with set-in terracotta plaques such as have been excavated at Ahichhatra-Rāmgarh, Pahārpur<sup>2</sup> and Nandangarh.<sup>3</sup> Probably they were destroyed in the Hūna-Gurjara invasion, and for centuries no other shrines worth mention seem to have been erected.

When towards the end of the 10th century the Cāhamānas of Śākambharī and Ajmer threw off the suzerainty of the Pratihāras of Kanauj and extended their influence over western Jangaladeśa, they seem to have erected Śiva temples at Pallū and somewhere near Ratangarh (in S.E. Bīkānēr State), of which at present only a few sculptures survive (fig. 7). A third one was erected about the middle of the 11th century at Morkhāna (fig. 11, 12), 22 miles S.E. of Bīkānēr Town. The temple<sup>4</sup> is at present dedicated to Susānī, the protectress (kula-devī) of the Sūrānās, a Sānkhilā Paramāra clan said to have been converted to Jainism in the reign of Jai Singh Siddharājā of Gujarat (1094-1142). According to local tradition Susānī was the daughter of a banya living near Nāgaur but was in reality an incarnation of Ambikā (the Jain version of the Great Mother Goddess). When the "nawāb" of Nāgaur laid eyes on her, she fled into the desert and disappeared into the womb of the earth near a Śiva temple at Morkhāna when the Muslim pursuers threatened to overtake her. This story derives from a historical event; for in the 3rd quarter of the 13th century rājā Karan Singh<sup>5</sup> I of Jaisalmer slew Muzaffar Khān, the last governor of Nāgaur, when the latter tried to abduct a Hindu girl. Though this "Śivālaya" is at present shown at some distance from the Susānī temple, it is obvious that the latter is the real old Śiva shrine. According to an inscription on the right side of the porch, the Susānī temple seems to have been occupied by the Jains only in the late 14th century, was repaired by one Hemarājā about 1440 and reconsecrated by Nandivardhana Sūri in 1516. However, the devalī (memorial stone) inscriptions of Morkhāna go back to the late 12th and a "Govardhan" (memorial column) even to the 11th century.<sup>6</sup> The oldest inscription in the temple, of 1172 (*Samvat* 1229) mentions a lady donor, Sonī Devā (Susanevī) whose name was probably transferred by later legend to the anonymous Hindu girl of Nāgaur. The sculptures of the temple are unmistakably Śaivite, for they represent Durgā in the northern, Śiva or Ambikā in the western and Gaṇeśa in the southern exterior niche of the sanctuary.

Unfortunately very little of the exterior of the original temple can be seen, for its substructure was in the middle of the last century completely hidden by a broad and high terrace on which grow the two trees between which Susānī is said to have disappeared. An arched gallery has been built in the front of the mandapa; the cornice and domes have been covered in by a pentroof and battlement parapet; the cella has been coated with a crude decoration of polished white plaster and surrounded by a low enclosure; and the heavy spire seems to date from restorations in the 15th and 16th centuries. Nevertheless, it is possible to get an idea of the original building, the more as the interior is practically untouched. Above a socle almost as high as the mandapa rises the cella (12 feet by 11 feet) with its śikhara, each wall face divided by recesses into five sections. To these recesses correspond a central roofed niche with the seated image of the tutelary deity of the quarter, and four arched larger and two miniature niches with fan-bearing godlings, Surasundaris (heavenly nymphs) and other minor deities, in the portentous Cāhamāna style. In the stucco-coated walls beautifully worked Gavākshas (dormer

<sup>1</sup> 11 for 1917-18, p. 21 ff.; for 1918-19, p. 22 f.

<sup>2</sup> 63.

<sup>3</sup> Also at Bhitā, Mahāsthān, Medh, etc.

<sup>4</sup> 220 for 1916, p. 210 ff.

<sup>5</sup> 42, III, p. 531.

<sup>6</sup> 220 for 1916, p. 210.



windows) rampant lions and floral ornaments may be seen. The mandapa is enclosed by a broad balustrade with banks on top and two small shrines at the entrance; its flat roof is supported by twenty columns, which outside are simple Śrīdhara with cross corbels, but are more elaborate within, with pot-and-foilage (ghatapallava) capitals on top of lotus half-roundels. One column bears a seated image of Kubera (?), another, to the right of the cella entrance, a figure of the lady Soni Devā, in the rigid style of the early memorial tablets (fig. 12). The cella entrance is surrounded by rich foliage scrolls, miniature gavāksha pediments and sculptures of Dwārapālas and other godlings in arched and quadrangular niches, but so thickly coated with oil and dust that the figures are hardly discernible. The type of the temple, as it emerges on a closer examination, is not rare in the area of former Cāhamāna domination, but it must be regarded as a remarkable achievement in the midst of this sandy desert, as all its stones seem to have been brought from the Aravalli mountains.

It seems that Jain temples were also erected at this early date. Thus a temple at Tārānagar<sup>1</sup> (Reni District) claims to have been founded in *Samvat* 999 (942), or in *Samvat* 1008 (951), another at Nohar<sup>2</sup> in *Samvat* 1084 (1027) and a third at Bhīnasar outside Bīkānēr Town in *Samvat* 1204 (1148).<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately no traces of these early structures remain so that traditions may well refer to some idol of possibly quite different origin. For in the times of the Muslim conquest many idols, especially small ones, were saved from desecration in the saddle bags of fugitives retiring into the desert. The only actual remains of Jain temples so far have been traced at Pallū, in the south western corner of Nohar district, about 60 miles south-south-east of Sūrātgarh. But here, too, practically nothing of the old temples has survived except a number of sculptures and architectural fragments, some of which are in the Bīkānēr Museum, another is built into the walls of the Brahmanī temple (middle 19th century) and a third group lies amongst the dunes at Gosainō, about one mile to the south of Pallū. They must have belonged to at least three different temples ranging from the middle 12th to the late 13th century. The larger ones, which contained the two wonderful Sarasvatī (fig. 9-10) groups in polished white marble which we shall have to discuss later on, may possibly have been structures of sun-dried bricks; the third, however, was a small but delicately carved chapel in red sandstone. It is remarkable that none of these temples is connected with Cāhamāna art; they must have been pure representatives of the Gujarāṭi style, as it flourished under Kumārapāla Solankī (1144-1173) and the Vāghela rulers (13th century).

After the Muslim invasion had passed, it was again the Jains who first resumed the construction of temples. Before the foundation of Bīkānēr State, Hemarājā, son of Śivarājā, had started to repair the Susānī shrine at Morkhāna.<sup>4</sup> When Bīkānēr was founded, a rich merchant, the Oswāl Bhānda,<sup>5</sup> began to build the Bhāndasar temple (fig. 22), in honour of the Tīrthankar Pārśvanātha, by the side of Bīkāji's modest shrine of the protector of the state, the Lakshminātha.<sup>6</sup> This, the most ambitious of all Bīkānēr temples, was not completed until 1514, almost 50 years later. The spire, with its śringas and upaśringas of decorative small śikhara, and its gilded flagstaff, towers high above the rest of the town and can be seen from afar. Above the cella with its circumambulatory are two storeys, each opening into four balconies and interconnected by narrow stairs; the centre of these upper rooms is consecrated to a Samavasarana, that Jain symbol of the "world-city" presided over by four of the world-teachers. The architecture in the yellow Jaisalmer stone is crude like that of other contemporary Jain temples in Mārwar and Jaisalmer. But the mandapa, and the galleries and porches surrounding it make a better impression, as they belong to a partial reconstruction in the early 17th century. They show that same "Akbarī"-Rājput architecture, mixed with contemporary Mughal motifs and executed in the red sandstone which is so characteristic of all the buildings of the reigns of Sūr and Karan Singhji. Unfortunately the interior is completely spoilt by bad modern paintings.

<sup>1</sup> 151; 152.

<sup>2</sup> 151; 152; and local information.

<sup>3</sup> 151; the present temple, reign of Sardār Singh.

<sup>4</sup> 220 for 1916, p. 210.

<sup>5</sup> 170, vol. IIIA, p. 382 ff.; 35, p. 24; 212, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> The Lakshminātha is hidden behind a modern enclosure and admission is most exclusive; but a faithful picture is amongst the murals in the back gallery of the Gaj Mandir. The idol is a clumsy silver mask, cp. 31, p. 17.



From an artistic point of view the next Jain temple, the Chintāmani (fig. 25), represents a considerable progress. Its cella and chief mandapa were erected in Jaisalmer stone by rāo Bīkāji and completed shortly after his death in 1505.<sup>1</sup> Thirty years later it was enlarged, in red stone, by another hall and an open front porch and two small side porches. It was to enshrine an idol of Ādinātha, which Rāo Chondāji had taken when in 1380 he got possession of Mandor, the old capital of Mārwar, and which Bīkāji had brought from Jodhpur. Rather modest in size, the Chintāmani represents a somewhat clumsy attempt to revive the richly decorated Solankī and Vāghela architecture of Mediaeval Gujarāt. The workmanship of the masons is careful, but the motifs are thoroughly misunderstood. There are friezes of lotus leaves, diamond lozenges, star flowers, Kīrtimukha masks, Hamsas, etc. But the meaning of the pot-and-foliage (ghatapallava) capitals of the multiple type, found for example at the Rudramahālaya at Siddhpur,<sup>2</sup> is lost, and the too small curved brackets rise in a quite unorganic manner from the midst of the capitals. The Hamsa friezes resemble much more those of Sāsānian than of Hindu art, and the domes, rising above an octagonal stylobate, consist of successive corbelled circles of lotus petals, as in many Muslim buildings at Ahmadābād or Chāmpāner. The spire is short and heavy, and the socle rudimentary. In the additions of 1535 the imitative character of the old motifs has already disappeared so that we are confronted with a simple and early stage of that Rājput architecture which Akbar used at Fathpur Sikrī. The substructure, the columns, the capitals, the domes and the pentroofs have now been taken over complete from Gujarātī-Muslim architecture. On the other hand its rich arabesques and floral decorations have been austere simplified, and lozenge and Hamsa friezes and panels, and the occasional elephant figures, reveal a development which had its origin in a "Renaissance" of Mediaeval Hindu architecture. When in 1583 Rāo Rāi Singhji deposited the Jain idols recovered from the Sirohi booty in a vault in the Chintāmani<sup>3</sup> court, another Jain temple was commenced, the Ādinātha<sup>4</sup> in the Natha Quarter. It is an almost exact copy of the Chintāmani, housing a marble idol of exceptional size, inscribed with a dedication of the great ruler. The ornamentation of this temple is somewhat richer, though its chief charm consists in the later ceiling paintings of flying parīs (devatās), of the same type as those found in the Chandar Mahal, Gaj Mandir and Sardār Nivās in Bīkāner Fort.

The most beautiful Jain temple, however, is the Neminātha (fig. 23), dedicated in *Samvat* 1593 (1536),<sup>5</sup> to the South of the Lakshminātha, quite near to Rāo Bīkāji's first fort. It follows, on the whole, the same groundplan as the preceding temples; a cella surmounted by a high śikhara, a closed mandapa with lateral doors and an open ardhamandapa likewise accessible from three sides. What distinguishes it from its predecessors, is the rich and mature decoration which occupies an interesting intermediate position between the Jain "Renaissance" architecture of 15th-16th century Gujarāt and the early Kachhwāha temples of Amber and the Braj Country (Muttrā, Govardhan, etc.).<sup>6</sup> One "Renaissance" innovation is the resumption of the slightly receding high substructure (pītha), another, the richer organization of the śikhara, with eight pronounced śringas and an āmalasara (coping stone) curving elegantly into a smaller āmalasari and the kalaśa (pinnacle). The cella entrance, in its turn, displays all the wealth of mediaeval art. The threshold (udumbara) projects in a semicircular drum (ardhachandra) flanked by sturdy Kīrtimukha faces, the jambs rise in massive antepagments with supplementary smaller fasciae, the lintel is decorated with several friezes, a cornice and a set of five half-engaged niches (rūpa) enclosing divine images; the bottom of the doorjambs is protected by Dwārapālas attended by minor godlings in niches of the Vāghela type. The roof is supported by brackets decorated with dancing āpsaras, of which most have disappeared. Its ornament abounds in exuberant leafwork scrolls, such as had been in fashion since the late Gupta period, and strongly stylized creeper-spirals growing from the beaks of Hamsas—both of Sāsānian type such as can first be traced in Vāghela art. There are also pearl pendants, Kīrtimukhas and Gavākshas, broken up into mere band arabesques. But a complete break with

<sup>1</sup> Inscriptions S. 1380, S. 1562 and S. 1592 in the temple; 212, p. 23; 35, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> 153.

<sup>3</sup> Inscription S. 1545 and S. 1662 in the temple.

<sup>4</sup> 412, pp. 58 ff., pls. 37-44.

<sup>5</sup> 170, II, p. 382 ff.; 214; 212, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> 62; 103; cp. also 197.



tradition, an autonomous development of the ornament also strikes the eye. The diamond lozenge, the mediaeval substitute for any ornament which proved too difficult, is applied in an endless variety of combinations, even as a sort of string course. A similar variety can be traced in the use of the four-and-eight-petalled star-flower. The pot-and-foilage capital has been transformed into an octagonal or recessed quadrangular block, decorated with various medallions and supporting a sharp-edged disk from which emanate the corbels. At several prominent places, for example by the side of the cella entrance, evenscroll-work arabesques of purely Indo-Muslim type are introduced.

Parallel with this evolution of the Jain temple went that of the orthodox Hindu shrines. The great Bhaironji<sup>1</sup> (=Bhairava, a natural lingam), which Rāo Bikāji had brought from Jodhpur, was set up at Kodāmdesar on an enclosed platform. For the image of Nāgnechiji<sup>2</sup> (Durgā Rāshtrasenā), the clan goddess of the Rāthors, which is supposed to have been brought from Kanauj and which rānī Jasamā Devī had been forced to surrender, Bikāji erected a temple two miles to the south-east of the town. Though a small building, it forms a not less conspicuous landmark than the Bhāndasar Temple. It stands in the centre of a small court on the top of a high brick terrace rising from the flat plain like a cliff. This brick terrace must once have been a fort defending the regalia of the young kingdom, of the same type as Bikāji-kī-Tekrī, the founder's first residence. The organization of the wall-faces and of the rich śikhara with its many subsidiary spires and sringas of miniature śikharas, is the same as that of the Chintāmani temple; but the niches of the subsidiary deities project like the balconies of the Bhāndasar, and one subsidiary shrine niche has been added on top of the pediment. On the other hand the sculptures are poorer than those of the Chintāmani. Even the comparatively rich cella entrance, though it tries to imitate the mediaeval form with its rich sill, lintel jambs and fasciae and Dwārapāls in arched Vāghela niches, is of disappointing quality. This old entrance, of a hard dark-red stone, has in recent times been removed to the entrance of the temple court, on top of a long and broad flight of steps and the old porch has been replaced by a quite unsuitable modern façade in late Rājput taste. To judge from its style, the Nāgnechiji Temple must be older than the Chintāmani and may have been constructed about the middle of Bikāji's reign.

Rāo Lūnkaran<sup>3</sup> (1505-1526) constructed two other important temples, the Lakshmī-Nārāyan (Lakshminātha) at Bikānēr, and the Kapila Muni by the side of the lake of Kolāyat. Both belong to the same heavy and crude type of architecture as the Bhāndasar, but are of rather modest size. The mandapas are open, supported by short columns with simple cross corbels. It is difficult to say anything of the decoration as both the cellas with their śikharas and the mandapas have been completely plastered over in later times, and the domes were renovated as early as the beginning of the 17th century. The same applies to the temple which Rāo Jetsī (1527-1539)<sup>4</sup> erected for the deified Charan prophetess, Karniji, in the sacred grove of wild plum trees surrounding the place of her final disappearance in a flame. It must have been a very small shrine and has completely disappeared behind the additions enlargements and embellishments of later centuries.

When the Rājputs joined the Mughal service, temple building soon came to a standstill. With the exception of Akbar and occasionally also of Jahāngīr the Mughal emperors discouraged temple building. Temples were sometimes destroyed by Shāhjahān, and by Aurangzēb systematically; and the long absence of the rājās from their states, and finally a far-going secularisation of outlook may have worked to the same effect. Not that religious service was neglected; but the already existing shrines seemed to be sufficient for the purpose. During the later 16th, the 17th and 18th centuries only a few chapels were erected in Bikānēr, all in the style of contemporary secular architecture. When Rāi Singh constructed his mighty fort (1588-1593), a palace chapel was, of course, not forgotten. This Har Mandir—now

<sup>1</sup> 220 for 1916, p. 217.      <sup>2</sup> 235, p. 25; 164, p. 9; 31, p. 13; 212, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> See above p. 59 note 6; 170, IIIA, p. 382 ff.; 156, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> 164, p. 15; this first shrine now is completely hidden behind the later superstructures and wall decorations. Thanks to the propaganda of the Chāran bards, the cult of the Chāran saint Karniji by and by usurped the role of the leading Śākta and state cult.



completely built over and enlarged—has a small cella, dedicated to Brahmā, Vishnu, Maheśa, Sūrya and Ganeśa. It is in Akbarī Mughal-Rājput taste, richly gilded and capped by the oblong pyramidal vaults so characteristic of that period. The entrance to the small temple court is of great beauty; its wood carvings, combining charming lotus rosettes, peacock and parrot panels and medallions with Hindu bracket-bosses and Muslim star cartouches and arabesques, represent a variety of the so-called “Akbarī- Doors” of Lahore. Similar doors are still to be found in a number of old houses in the city (fig. 24). An extension of this chapel is the Kārkhāna Gangā-Jal in which the Ganges water for the mahārājā and the many South Indian idols brought home from Adoni by Anūp Singhji are kept; but it is without any artistic interest. The second temple of the Fort is the Devīdwāra where the Great Mother is venerated under various aspects: Nāgnechiji or Durgā Rāshtrasenā (thrice), Naudurgāji, (“The 9 Mothers”) Chāmundā, Rājrajesvari (Lady of the Realm), Tuljā Deviji, Kālikā Deviji and Sobhāgyā Deviji. The idols are of diverse type and origin; some are merely yantras (mystic drawings); one had once been the protectress of the royal library; one was installed by a rānī of Rāi Singhji, and one by his brother Rām Singh. The present chapels were built in the reign of Rātan Singhji<sup>1</sup>, but the entrance hall to the temple court, with its painted wall decoration and Mughal-Rājput pillars bearing elephant heads between the capitals and the bracket bosses, is good work of the middle 17th century, of the reign of Sūr Singhji or Karan Singhji. There are, of course other chapels in the fort, e.g. those of Kālikā Devī and Kotaśrī (Protectress of the Fort) in the porch of the Sūraj Parol (Sun Gate) and the Bhaironji-kāsthān, where a man is said to have been buried alive. But they possess no artistic interest.

The oldest temple of Karniji at Deshnoke still to be seen was erected in the reign of Sūr Singhji.<sup>2</sup> It is a two-storeyed sanctuary, surmounted by a fluted central dome which, in its turn, is enclosed by smaller fluted lotus domes and oblong dome vaults inspired by the style of the mausolea of the Deccanī kings. A subsidiary shrine dedicated to Awad is of the same period. Some years after the Jodhpur siege of 1739 which had been raised thanks to the personal interference of Karniji who appeared as a white kite on the highest palace tower, Zorāwar Singh donated a golden umbrella to the shrine. But the present vast enclosure was constructed in 1825 by Sūrat Singhji, who also donated a costly canopy; and the present entrance, with its rich but decadent marble carvings, was added by Mahārājā Gangā Singhji.<sup>3</sup>

Whereas Jaipur, Jodhpur and the Rājput states further to the East saw a glorious revival of temple building during the 18th century, nothing similar occurred at Bikanēr. When it was at last resumed in the early 19th century, the inspiration seems to have come from Jodhpur.<sup>4</sup> There the Vallabhāchāryas and the Nātho had won great popularity, and Bijai Singh and Mān Singh had built a great number of splendid temples. The Ganghamji-kā-Mandir, Kunjbiহারji and others dedicated to Śrī Krishnaji, the darling of the heavenly gopis and earthly women, are especially noteworthy. The type of these temples is completely different from that of the mediaeval and post-mediaeval shrines. It represents an enlargement of the private chapel which under Mughal rule had been the usual centre of daily service. Generally the shrine proper is an upper room on one side of a court, often it lies behind one of the open halls surrounding the court, sometimes enclosed by a circumambulatory. Where the temple proper still follows the mediaeval type, it is rather small and lies in the midst of an inner court, thus corresponding to the position of the private chapel. The religious character of the building is not revealed by the exterior, but by the pretentious flight of steps leading to a porch or a toran (free standing decorative arch) with the image of Krishna Murlidhar (the Flute Player) or by two flanking elephant statues. The interior walls are, of course, richly decorated with wall paintings of mythological subjects or miniatures glazed and framed in gold stucco, and the ceilings with parīs (apsaras) flying through clouds; and on the cella door is lavished all the splendour usually reserved for the sleeping rooms of the royal zenānas.

<sup>1</sup> 212.<sup>2</sup> Tradition lost, but reliable style evidence.<sup>3</sup> 164, p. 53, p. 77, p. 79.<sup>4</sup> 3, p. 75 ff., pls. opp. p. 4, p. 77, p. 100, p. 102, p. 430; and own observations.



The temples of this type in Bikānēr State—and also at Jaisalmer<sup>1</sup>—do not equal in splendour those mentioned above. The oldest of them is the Panch Mandir or Dhunināth,<sup>2</sup> built in 1808 by a yogī of the same name from public collections and, like the Har Mandir of the Fort, dedicated to Brahmā, Vishnu, Maheśa, Sūrya and Ganeśa. It is a rather sober building of considerable size, with low corner towers and a Naqqar-Khāna (music pavilion) above the entrance, which is approached by a broad flight of steps. The Jagannāth Temple, on the other hand, erected nearby in 1876 by the Bhatti-yānī Rānī of Mahārājā Sardār Singh,<sup>3</sup> forms an almost windowless block. It is embellished however by a flight of steps leading to a porch with a front of five many-cusped arches resting on elegant columns and covered by a shallow-curved vault decorated with friezes of lotus petals. The most monumental temples of this type are the Rāj-Ratan-Bihārījī,<sup>4</sup> built by Mahārājā Ratan Singhjī in 1850, and by its side the Rasik-Śiromanījī Temple, a donation of the late Mahārājā Gangā Singhjī, both in a public garden between the town and the Fort, and finally the Sheo-bārī Temple<sup>5</sup> erected in 1880 by Mahārājā Dūngar Singh to the South East of Bikānēr city. The first two are Vallabhāchārya shrines, interconnected by a bridge. The construction of the Rāj-Ratan-Bihārījī was occasioned by the flight of the the Jaipur “popes” of this Vaishnava sect to Bikānēr. The fact that the Vallabhāchāryas regard their highpriests (mahārāj) as living incarnations of god Krishna, had in the course of time led to an ambiguous confusion of mysticism and sexuality. The resultant abuses led to the expulsion of the sect from Jaipur, the schism of the Swāmī-Nārāyanas and finally the great scandal case at Bombay.<sup>6</sup> Ratan Singhjī served the futigive Mahārājs with almost abject devotion and spent heavy sums for their maintenance, until they decided at last to settle near Mathurā in the holy country of the Krishna cult. Like the Dhunināth and Jagannāth, the Rāj-Ratan-Bihārījī is of the mansion type. Four octangular towers and four “entrance” buildings on the main axes, all of them accentuated by domed octagonal or oblong pavilions surmounting the roof, are interconnected by open galleries and, on the roof, by small eight-columned pavilions with open balconies in front. The substructure, the main body of the towers and the subsidiary bays flanking the galleries are executed in the red sandstone of Khari, the rest, including the broad flight of steps, in white Makrana marble. The effect of the lithe alternation of swelling and relaxing rhythms, of heavy and light, angular and round, simple and ornamental forms in the front facade is extremely pleasing. The other sides are simply decorated with two storeys of rather meagre open galleries and above with small pavilions with bangaldar roofs, all executed in red sandstone. The Rasik-Śiromanījī (fig. 51) leaves the impression of a rather restless “Baroque” variation of the Rāj-Ratan-Bihārījī. By drawing those petty side galleries also over the front facade, the latter has lost its harmonious balance; the uniformity of the entrance building and of the corner towers has also been broken by protruding terraces and balconies, and that of the roof line by the slim, high columns which detach the roofs of the pavilions from the rest of the building. The combination of marble and sandstone forms achieves a colourful effect, but it is rather that of light reflections after rain than that of delicate unearthly quality which the older arrangement had succeeded in suggesting.

Of course, quite a number of minor temples of this type are found all over Bikānēr State, in and around Bikānēr Town, at Bhīnasar, Devīkund, Kolāyat, Pugal, Sūratgarh, Ratangarh, Nohar and elsewhere. Some have a court, some consist merely of a shrine with a circumambulatory, others lie just above ground, and others again are reached by a flight of steps. Their decoration likewise varies from heavy brick-and-rubble construction covered with mud plaster or stucco, to elegant columns, arches, trellis work and railings carved in red sandstone. Wall paintings of mythological subjects are common, but the Rādhā-Krishna motifs predominate so much as to invade even the walls of the provincial Jain temples. Before many of these temples torans (arches) have also been erected, though they are plainer and simpler than those at Jaipur and Jodhpur. A rich toran, of modern date, stands in front of the north facade of the Fort Palace.

<sup>1</sup> 3, p. 87 ff. pls. opp. pp. 90, 166, 352, 436; 64.

<sup>2</sup> 170, IIIA, p. 382 ff.; 212, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> 212, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> 212, p. 22; 164, p. 101; 156, p. 5; 170, IIIA, p. 382 ff., 183, pl. 44.

<sup>5</sup> 212, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> 226.



With the reforms of Mahārājā Gangā Singhji the "School of Arts" revival of Indian architecture was introduced also at Bikanēr. It resulted in a considerable enrichment of styles, but also in the final disintegration of that unconscious good taste, which had lasted so long. Many excellent temples and secular buildings have been erected especially under the influence of Sir Swinton Jacob. But there are also lamentable failures where Victorian Neo-Gothicism has been translated into the language of late Rajput art.

## 2. *The Mausolea*

Mausolea play a role almost as prominent in Rājput as in Muslim art. And the Muslim model may have encouraged the development of the Rājput chhattī (samādh) and has certainly influenced it in minor details. Much stronger was the formal influence of Hindu temple architecture. But as a type of funeral monument the chhattī is neither Muslim, nor Hindu, nor does it belong to the group of Central Asian-Sāsānian traditions imported by the Western immigrants among the Rājput clans. Its origins must probably be sought in the wooden sheds which the primitive tribes of Rājputānā and Central India, the Bhils,<sup>1</sup> Minas, Meos, etc. used to erect over the memorial tablets and posts to their dead. The chhattī is a stone canopy resting on four, twelve, or more columns built over the actual funeral stone, under which the ashes of the deceased may or may not have been buried, on or near the spot of the actual cremation. It is probably no accident that the chhattī appears after the Muslim invasions first in the Southern Rājput states, especially Mewār, and that it was never introduced among the Rājputs of the Himālayas.

In Bikanēr, where local quarries were discovered only towards the end of the 16th century, the fashion of building chhattīs was first introduced by the Rāthor rulers, probably as early as the reign of Bikāji, and certainly not later than the early years of Rāi Singhji. The three chhattīs of Bikāji and his successors at Bikāji-ki-Tekrī represent later renovations in red sandstone, apparently in the middle 17th century, whereas that of Bikāji was in 1916 again replaced by a white marble replica. The memorial stones in all of them are of rather recent date. It is obvious that the early original monuments had not seemed to later generations worthy of Bikanēr's increasing importance.

Thus the only early mausolea in Bikanēr are the few Muslim tombs at Bhatner-Hanumāngarh. Ferishta<sup>2</sup> mentions that Shēr Khān who in 1241-1247 rebuilt Bhatner Fort as a defence work against the Mongols for his uncle, the later sultān Balban, was after his assassination buried there in a magnificent tomb. And it may be assumed that his successors, and possibly some officers of the Mughal prince-governor, Kāmran, who held Bhatner between 1531 and 1537, may have found a similar though less spectacular resting-place. At present only three such mausolea can be traced. One, inside the fort, has since been converted into a Śiva temple. The most important however, is the present shrine of Bābā Amarnāthji, (fig. 30) opposite the Bhadrakālī Temple, on the site of an old Yaudheya Therī of the same name. It is a sober structure of pleasing proportions, a rectangular block supporting an octagonal drum, on which rests the dome. Each side is decorated with three blind-arched windows, the entrance is accentuated by a slightly projecting facade with a cornice and the drum is crowned by a battlement frieze and the dome by a lotus pinnacle. This type had been rather common in Irānian art, and in Indo-Muslim art since the Mongol invasions. But the grouping of the blind windows, the arrangement of the facade, the proportions of the drum and the curve of the dome represent a stylistic phase intermediate between late Tughluq and Lodī architecture. As provincial architecture always lagged behind that of the capitals by half a century at least, it seems most probable that "Bābā Amarnāthji's Shrine" had been the mausoleum of one of sultān Kāmran's officers.

Since the reign of rāo Jetsī (1526-1539) the group of tanks at Devikund, 5 miles east of Bikanēr, became the cremation ground of the Bikanēr rulers. In the course of centuries there gathered round them a pleasing, but now badly neglected little palace for the temporary accomodation of the mourners,

<sup>1</sup> 126.

<sup>2</sup> 73, I, p. 235.



temples and three enclosures protecting the royal chhatris, and a number of less prominent memorials for princes, princesses, concubines, and so on. The oldest of these chhatris is that of Rāo Kalyān Mall (1539-1571). It consists of a canopy in Jaisalmer stone and brick work standing on a small platform, which rests on a larger terrace. The four pillars, the lower part of which is quadrangular, the upper octagonal, support on simple cross-corbels a lotus dome, placed on top of a pentroof and a decorative battlement frieze. This chhattri is obviously an imitation of the similar early monuments at Ārh, near Udaipur, and at Amber. Its architectural type is that of the Nandi-Mandapa, the little pavilion erected over the bull statue confronting the lingam of a Śiva temple, or of the less common Garuda-Mandapa in front of a Vishnu temple. The dome, however, is a Muslim innovation. It replaces the earlier Hindu stepped roof, and was introduced by the Lodī and Sur sultans of Delhi and the sultāns of Mālwa when they adopted this simple chhattri type, like other features of early Rājput art, to take the place of the quoin turrets of their own mausolea. In Rāo Kalyān Mall's chhattri the lotus dome was added in the 17th century. For rānīs, princes, concubines and lesser notables this simple type of chhattri remained in fashion through the following centuries, often combined with a hall of many columns and several domes.

In the chhatris of Rāi Singhji (since replaced by a replica in white marble) and Sūr Singhji—built like all chhatris of the next two centuries in red sandstone—the style became richer and more elegant, resembling that of Akbar's buildings at Fathpur Sikrī; and on the ceiling of the latter for the first time appears a Rāslilā cycle in relief.

The biggest and finest mausolea of the 17th century are those of Rājā Karan Singhji (died 1675) and Mahārājā Anūp Singhji (died 1698). These chhatris rest on sixteen pillars, which support a high central dome, four small corner domes, and four dome-like oblong vaults along the axes, within the common frame of a surrounding pentroof (chhajja) and battlement frieze. In Karan Singhji's chhattri the pillars grow from leafwork bases and are, in their lower, quadrangular section covered with long, almost naturalistic plantain leaves, such as are found also in the emperor Aurangzeb's early buildings. The octagonal middle and sexadecagonal upper shaft of the pillars supports an echinus (cushion-like) capital crowned by four short cross brackets. The panels of the platform and the lower sides of the pentroof slabs are decorated with flower ornament in the classic Mughal taste. The interiors of the cupolas and vaults are also embellished with similar flower ornaments; the exteriors are fluted to suggest gigantic closed lotus flowers.

But Karan Singh's rich chhattri is of a classic simplicity when compared with the wealth of baroque ornament on the mausoleum of Anūp Singhji (fig. 53). As buildings they differ hardly at all. But in Anūp Singhji's chhattri all architectural forms are more developed and involved. The bases of the pillars are not simply decorated with leafwork, but with Mughal semi-circular panels, cusped and pointed like the contemporary arches and filled with flowers, the last strange descendants of the ancient Indian Gavāksha motif. The transition from the quadrangular to the octagonal shaft is effected by similar panels, that from the octagonal to the sexadecagonal by a rich band of ornament. The last section of the shaft is fluted, the capitals are more elegant, and the corbels, covered with leafwork, end in bosses. And over the dados of the substructure, the lower shafts of the pillars, the beams of the ceiling, the inner side of the pentroofs, the spandrels, vaults and cupolas, is spread the restless and exuberant arabesque ornament which developed in Shāhjahān's last years. The panels of the cupola drums are filled with flower niches and on the central ceiling is depicted a Rāslilā danced by four manifestations of Śrī Krishna and four Gopīs in a grove of cypresses which cover the joints of the vault (fig. 54).

This type of chhattri appeared first at Ārh and Mahāsati<sup>1</sup> in Udaipur and then at Amber and Hindoli (Būndī). It is a free adaptation of the ardha-mandapa of the Hindu temple and of the mediaeval baithak. After some rather hesitant experiments with other types evolved from the Muslim bārādārī (e.g. Bīr Singh Deo's mausoleum at Orchhā<sup>2</sup>) it became very common in the course of the 17th century. A

<sup>1</sup> 71, II, p. 165, fig. 357.

<sup>2</sup> 86.



systematic survey, however, has so far not been undertaken. But in this connection it may be sufficient to cite the chhatris of rāo Amar Singh Rāthor (1634-1644) and his successors at Nāgaur. That of Amar Singh's rānī is still of the simpler Hindoli type, with its echoes of the old Gujarātī tradition. Amar Singh's mausoleum closely resembles those of Karan and Anūp Singhji at Devikund; it has, however, no Raslilā reliefs but, instead, a Mughal vault-network and Rājput brackets. The later Nāgaur chhatris are of the same style as the post-Sujān Singhji mausolea at Bikānēr and the Kāga tombs at Jodhpur.

On the other hand the decoration of Karan Singhji's and Anūp Singhji's chhatris are, on the whole, still in the Akbarī tradition of Fatehpur Sikrī and of the early palaces of Agra and Lahore Fort. When in the last years of Jahāngīr the classic Mughal marble style conquered the imperial court, the older tradition survived in the provinces. The first stage of this provincial style is represented by the mausoleum of nawāb 'Isā Khān Tārkhān,<sup>1</sup> Shāhjahān's governor of Sind (1628-1644), at Thatta, the second by the above discussed chhatris of Karan and Anūp Singhji, in which the ornament of the early part of Aurangzēb's reign affects almost every detail, without, however, superseding the general character of the older type. In the royal chhatris of the following period the fully-fledged 'Ālamgīrī taste was at last adopted. Yet an echo of the mausolea of Karan and Anūp Singhji is found in the chhatrī of sādhu Śrī Paraśurām Giri, disciple of Giridhapati, built at Kolāyat in *Samvat* 1749 (1692), and in that erected in *Samvat* 1797 (1740) between the inner and outer eastern fortification lines of Bikānēr Fort by mahārājā Zorāwar Singhji for purohit Jagrāmji, who had been killed in action during the war with Jodhpur. Both samādhs are comparatively simple, their groundplan is hexagonal, and of the rich decoration only the already degenerated Raslilā ceiling reliefs have survived. Finally, in the chhatris of the rājās of Pugal and of other provincial vassals—some of them as late as the early 19th century—there is only a faint echo of the Akbarī style. Yet though the forms are simplified, the tradition of Fatehpur Sikrī and of earlier Rājput art is still unmistakable.

In the mausoleum of mahārājā Sujān Singhji (fig. 56) the pure late Mughal style was finally adopted in the form it had assumed under the emperor Aurangzēb. Though its ground plan strictly follows that of the ardhamandapa or sabhā mandapa of the Hindu temple, it is the only mausoleum at Devikund to which this applies—, every other detail being purely Mughal. The substructure is more or less the same as in Karan's or Anūp Singh's chhatris. But upon it there stand heavy-bellied Mughal columns decorated with fleshy lotus petals, which support duplicated, many-cusped Mughal arches. The fluted domes are covered with palm-leaf ornament, or are given a dynamic turn. Despite its strong articulation, the chhatrī makes a rather heavy impression as the bellied columns are rather short, especially in relation to the span of the arches, and as the pentroof still adheres to the broad older type which had harmonised well with the slim treabeate style of the older chhatris, but which clashes with the rhythm of the curved and bellied forms now introduced.

Later these shortcomings were corrected. The chhatrī of mahārājā Gaj Singhji (fig. 58) returned to the sixteen-columned ground plan of Karan's and Anūp Singhji's memorial shrines. But here all individual forms are of a perfect elegance, notwithstanding the extreme wealth of decoration. The bellied columns rise high and slim, the arches are light, the size of the pentroof has been reduced, and the domes create no oppressive effect. All proportions are perfect, and columns and arches reveal a fine dynamic curve in harmony with the pressure they are supposed to withstand. The decoration follows the elaborate late Mughal taste of the reign of Muhammad Shāh. The Raslilā reliefs are reduced to a frieze of twelve polygonal cartouches in which eight strongly stylized gopīs accompany on their stringed instruments the flutes of four manifestations of Śrī Krishna. The centre of the dome is filled with a big, threefold lotus rosette.

With the reign of Sūrat Singhji another change was introduced. Already in the ceilings of Gaj Singh's chhatrī white marble stucco and rich painting had dominated. Sūrat Singhji's mausoleum was

<sup>1</sup> 54, p. 118 ff., pls. 41-51. The first, very clumsy imitation of the Fatehpur Sikrī style in Sind is the mausoleum of Mir Masūm (1598) at Sakhara (ibid. p. 154, pl. 79); the tomb of Mīrzā Jānī Bēg Tārkhān (1599) (ibid. p. 119 f., pls. 52-54) shows it fully developed; 'Isā Khān's mausoleum represents the zenith, Mīrzā Tughral's tomb (ibid. p. 119 pls. 55 f.) is its last example in Sind (1686).



constructed completely in white Makrāna marble. Paintings arranged in oval cartouches were almost the sole decoration of the ceiling. Later the scope of their subjects was enlarged considerably, comprising practically the whole field of Hindu mythology and of Mughal-Rājput genre art. This type of royal mausoleum has continued to be the rule until the present day, and was, with increasing wealth, used also for the chhatris of the mahārānis, princes and princesses of the highest rank. And it is thanks to this tradition of ceiling-painting that the Bikānēr school of Rājput painting has managed to survive into our time, though the style has badly declined. Much more was now done to preserve the dignity of the royal tombs. Mahārājā Ratan Singh had all of them thoroughly repaired in 1836,<sup>1</sup> and others erected for prince Ānand Singh and Tārā Singhji at Reni in 1842. Unfortunately, however, the three enclosures at Devikund are so close to the mausolea that the latter can hardly be seen or their beauty enjoyed.

### 3. *Fortification Architecture*

Unlike other parts of India Bikānēr State has few strong forts. Rather did the natural protection offered by the desert, the paucity of building stone and the poverty of the country encourage a mobile guerilla war. Of course, from an early period places were fortified; the earliest seem to have been the Gupta forts of Pīr Sultān and Badopal, which are as yet hardly explored. Later we can trace two basic types—the fortified building and the fortified enclosure—in various stages of development, which not seldom overlap.

The first, used as residences by minor thākurs and chieftains, is very similar to the mud forts common among the martial tribes of the Khyber Pass, Wazīristān or Balūchistān. A tower or a house with a small court, stables, etc. was strengthened by corner towers, all constructed of a primitive wooden frame work covered with mud. At a later stage, for example Bikāji-ki Tekrī or the Nāgnechiji Temple, this house is placed on top of a platform of sun-dried bricks, often of considerable height and reached by a brick ramp on one side. In modern thākur seats this mansion on a platform often forms an inner fort, a Bala-Killa, within a larger fortification enclosing the stables, guest and servant houses, chapel and other buildings.

The second type developed from the cattle pen which in the desert is constructed of loosely packed thorn branches. By erecting sand walls held together and capped by thorn branches and tree trunks, villages could easily be transformed into fortresses; and this type of primitive fortress was common in Bikānēr even in the early 19th century. Where depressions permitted the formation of temporary lakes (Sar) and clay deposits, mud ramparts could be constructed around small towns, for example the old Sānkhilā capital, Janglū. Where such fortresses were time and again destroyed and rebuilt, mounds were formed, as at Pallū, Pugal or Bhatner-Hanumāngarh, which made easy the construction of really strong forts.

For the more developed fortification technique of other parts of India found its way into the desert at an early date. Bhatner-Hanumāngarh<sup>2</sup> was fortified by the Muslims in the reign of sultān Balban, under the Khiljis, the Lodis, in 1604, and finally after its occupation by Sūrat Singhji in 1805. It forms an irregular quadrangle of fifty-two bastions, overlooking the plains from a high mound, probably an old Yaudheya Theri. Apart from outlets for rainwater it has only one entrance, on the east side. The interior forms an irregular mass of clay mixed with brick and pottery fragments, falling towards the west in three levels. These, each approximately one storey high, seem to correspond to successive settlements, and the edge of each terrace still consists of crumbling house walls, holes of former rooms, wall niches, etc. The very impressive fortifications consist of several layers of brickwork, which have often been repaired. The earliest of these must be buried under the heaps of brick fragments which have accumulated at the foot of the bastions. Judging from the small, thin type of brick, the slanting walls, tapering towers and occasional decorative fragments, the lower visible part of

<sup>1</sup> 164, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> 164, p. 136 f.; 11 for 1917-18, p. 21 ff.; 156, p. 34; 222, II, p. 1163 f.



the walls seems to belong to the Khiljī period. The middle section, with some good brick friezes, must form part of the reconstruction executed for the emperor Jahāngīr by Rāi Manohar Rāi during the Mughal occupation, 1597-1604. (There is a fort inscription dated A.H. 1009/1604).<sup>1</sup> The crown of the walls with the long embrasures and engaged battlements, dates from the period of Sūrat Singhjī, like the present entrance which reveals the same, rather heavy architectural forms as Sūratgarh Fort (1799).

A smaller example of the same type is Pugal. The old "Brass Fort," somewhat to the north of the present fort, has disappeared under sand dunes, and it is difficult to verify the fantastic stories of its former splendour. Only one remnant of it can at present be traced, the core of a tower constructed of sundried bricks and rubble set in mortar. It probably dates from the same period as the "Ghazni Throne" of the Pugal rulers (not later than the 12th century). The present fort which overlooks a decayed bazar and some primitive huts, is, like Hanumāngarh, a mound surrounded by strong fortifications mainly of the 16th century Mughal type, the lower sections constructed in sun-dried, the upper ones in burnt brick. The gateway and the long vaulted passage leading to the exterior palace court are in the provincial Mughal style of the middle 17th century. The old palace and the Krishna temple belong to the early 19th century. But in the absence of any reliable tradition it is not possible to make any attempt at dating as the art styles of the great capitals reached such remote places only after a long time interval.

In Nāgaur,<sup>2</sup> on the other hand, the population of Bīkānēr State had an early model of stone fortification work. The Yamīnī governor, Abūalim, had already begun to strengthen the old mud fort of the Chauhāns; and the Muslim governors between 1195 and ca. 1280, especially Iltutmish's representative, Shams Khān, transformed it into an imposing fortress, with an inner fort surrounding the mound with the palaces and barracks, and an outer circumvallation protecting the town, all built of carefully joined masonry. It was, however, only after quarries had been discovered that forts of that type could become common in Bīkānēr.

When in 1588-1593 rāo Rāi Singhjī constructed his great fort<sup>3</sup> at Bīkānēr, all the stones had to be brought from Jaisalmer. But only this ruler, who could marshal the revenues of a kingdom increased by the conquest of half Mārwar and the grant of half Gujarāt, and who could make use of immense booty from Jodhpur, Gujarāt and the North Western Deccan, could afford such an expenditure. This fort, which even today is the most impressive sight in the state, forms a quadrangle with a perimeter of 1078 yards and possesses 37 bastions, on the average 40 feet high, a strong curtain wall and a moat 30 feet wide and 20 to 25 feet deep. It has two entrances, one on the east side protected by four gates, and another on the west side protected by a double gate.

The present fort (fig. 33) is however a composite structure, the result of the intensive activities of many rulers through more than four centuries. Rāi Singhjī's fort had been somewhat smaller, forming a regular square, with nine bastions on each side, and only one east gate.<sup>4</sup> The palaces occupied its southern side, with a view over the nearby town, like the Mughal palaces at Agra, Delhi and Lahore, which overlook a beautiful river side. But this position of the palaces on the southern ramparts necessitated the later extension of the Fort, as they were badly damaged in the siege of 1739 and probably also in that of 1808. The marks of the cannon balls fired from the Jodhpur batteries at the Anūp Sāgar are still visible along the whole southern palace front, from the Kārkhāna Kalān to the Gaj Mandir, and Gaj Singh's renovation of the Karan Mahal and Gaj Mandir must have been occasioned by the damage caused during the siege of 1739.

Rāi Singhjī's fortifications follow the type generally adopted in the time of Akbar the Great. The walls are slightly slanting, though not so much as in the Khiljī and Tughluq period, the bastions are broad and the battlements less prominent than in the preceding centuries, though not yet reduced to a mere ornament. The bastions at the corners and in the centre of each façade are broader and higher,

<sup>1</sup> 189, no. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 11 for 1921-22, p. 71 ff.; 43; 42, III, p. 622, pl. 36.

<sup>3</sup> 31, p. 48, p. 58; 170, IIIA, p. 382 ff.; 35, p. 18 ff., 67, I, p. 17; 156, p. 5; 212, p. 8 ff.; four miniatures in Lallgarh Palace, and a painting on a ceiling beam in the Chandar Mahal-Sāl.

<sup>4</sup> Sūraj Parol, fig. 27.



and on the south side the sleeping rooms of the ruler are situated above the central bastion, as at Delhi and Shāhjahān's Khwābgāh on top of the Musamman Burj at Agra. In fact the general disposition, though not the detailed plan of the palace had originally been taken over from the Mughal imperial castles. The entrance to the Fort, therefore, was situated in the vicinity of the palaces. This Sūraj Parol (Sun Gate, fig. 27) is an impressive structure. It is a big vaulted hall opening on two sides through high double arches. Inserted into one wall are several black stone slabs on which is carved the long praśasti (eulogy) on Rāj Singhjī<sup>1</sup>—the first attempt at a chronological reconstruction of Rāthor history and a magniloquent record of the rājā's wars. The small chapels of Kālikā Devi and Kota-Srī lie on the other two sides behind low balconies. The façade is flanked by two life-size statues of elephants with their riders, a device first developed in the later Jain temples of Rājputānā and later used also for the Mughal forts. The front, which faces the palace court, carries a gallery for the naqqara music, between two balconies in the purest Gujarātī-Rājput style of the 16th century.

Sūr Singh added to the east the great Sūr Sāgar tank (fig. 33) which contributes so much to the picturesque charm of the Fort. The ghāts which now surround it are a modern addition, as is evident from an old miniature at Lallgarh Palace which shows rājā Karan Singh in a pleasure boat on the tank. Karan Singhjī constructed the outworks with the Karan, Daulat and Fateh Parols, in the purest Mughal style, probably in anticipation of Aurangzēb's anti-Hindu policy.<sup>2</sup> By the side of the Daulat Parol the red-dyed hand prints of many rānīs (fig. 75) can be seen, their last pathetic memorial before they left, as satis, for the funeral pyre of their deceased lords and husbands.

It is not known when the southern extension of the Fort was built. It was probably conceived by mahārājā Gaj Singhjī, but not executed before the next siege of Bikānēr in 1808. A miniature<sup>3</sup> in Lallgarh Palace depicting prince Rāj Singh's wedding, and a ceiling panel in the open gallery in front of the Chandar Mahal, which must have been painted in the reign of Sūrat Singhjī, both represent the fort still without the southern extension. But Captain A. H. E. Boileau<sup>4</sup> mentioned it in 1835 as the stable and menagerie court. Apparently the work was then not yet quite completed. For whereas the main gate of this extension is named after Sūrat Singh, the Ratan Gate connecting it with the Sūraj Parol and the old fort, and the stables and arsenal (topkhāna) were constructed not earlier than the reign of Sardār Singhjī<sup>5</sup>; and the last additions, the Dhārū or Singh Parol, the Deo Bilās pavilion and Sheo Nivās Garden, were built as late as the time of Dūngar Singhjī.

A considerable area of the old fort is occupied by the Gajpat Vilās Garden, barracks, administrative buildings and several old, deep wells. The palace occupies only a fifth of the old Fort grounds, but the immense pile rising in six to eight storeys around six courts could accommodate a great number of offices, stores and luxurious apartments, which will receive special description.

Though Gaj Singh's schemes for the extension of his residential fort did not materialize in his lifetime, he did, however, surround Bikānēr City with new walls and gates.<sup>6</sup> Executed in the red sandstone of Khari, they follow the Mughal system and style of the early 18th century. Though this fortification was extended towards the north-west as late as the reign of Dūngar Singhjī, more as a protection against robbers and similar elements, much of it has in recent times been demolished to make room for the growth of the town in the direction of the Old Fort and, beyond, to the modern government quarters and Lallgarh Palace. Gaj Singhjī also started the system of forts to control the north and east of the state, though this too was completed by Sūrat Singhjī: Rājgarh (1765),<sup>7</sup> Nohar (1783-1813),<sup>8</sup> Sūratgarh (1799),<sup>9</sup> Dumbli-Fatehgarh (1799),<sup>10</sup> Bhatner-Hanumāngarh,<sup>11</sup> Sujāngarh (Kharbūje-ke-Kot, 1789).<sup>12</sup> Insofar as they are not adaptations of older fortifications, these forts are miniature repetitions of Bikānēr Fort. They consist of a square or quadrangular circumvallation protected by eight or more

<sup>1</sup> 220 for 1918, p. 262 f.

<sup>2</sup> In Lallgarh Palace is a contemporary portrait of Karan Singh with Bikānēr Fort in the background; it shows the outwork of these three gates.

<sup>3</sup> DN 51.

<sup>4</sup> 35, p. 18 ff.

<sup>5</sup> 156, p. 5; local information and style evidence.

<sup>6</sup> 35, p. 18 f.; 212, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> 156, p. 32; 164, p. 68.

<sup>8</sup> 164, p. 139.

<sup>9</sup> 164, p. 73, p. 136; local information; 156, p. 34.

<sup>10</sup> 164, p. 73.

<sup>11</sup> 164, p. 75, p. 136 f.

<sup>12</sup> 156, p. 30.



towers, a gateway in the centre of one front, a palace overlooking the opposite front, and stables and barracks arranged on both sides of the court; the central hall of the palace is reserved for administrative work and guest durbars, the upper storeys provide residential quarters for the commander or the ruler in case of an occasional visit. The enclosure built by Sūrat Singhji around the Karniji Sanctuary<sup>1</sup> at Deshnoke in 1825 follows the same system of octagonal corner towers, a wall with rampart, embrasures and battlements, an outer court between the earlier sanctuary, which was likewise fortified, and the gateway, now hidden behind a modern façade which bears decadent marble reliefs. Many mansions of thākurs imitate the same type, though here the fortified enclosure often forms merely an extension and first defence line around an older mansion raised on a brick or rubble platform.

#### 4. *The Palaces*

As already mentioned, Bikanēr Fort contains an immense pile of palace buildings<sup>2</sup> which in the course of time have been heaped one on the other. For in the absence of other natural strong-points the mighty fortification constructed by rājā Rāi Singhji attracted whatever luxury architecture was planned in the state. The few palaces in other royal forts were not intended to be more than temporary shelters for a travelling court, and the palaces at Gajner the hunting seat, belong to the period of British supremacy, like the present residence of the mahārājās, Lallgarh.

The first impression of the palaces (figs. 28, 31) in Bikanēr Fort is bewildering. Storeys rise over storeys, courts open within courts, temples, halls, galleries, living rooms, offices, kitchens follow each other in many styles, without any apparent plan or system. A closer analysis, however, soon brings order into this chaos. The original groundplan follows approximately that of the Mughal palaces or of the famous palace of Amber near Jaipur. After the visitor had passed the Sūraj Parol, he reached the great exterior court of the Fort at the other end of which stood, behind an entrance hall, the Devīdwāra with the seven low shrines of the Mothers. To the right he left the gardens, stables and barracks and, turning to the left, he entered through a gate (now replaced by the Dūsubh or Tripolia Gate) a first reception court where the palace guards were accommodated. From there a ramp led up to the Mīna Deodhi Chowk around which the offices, the Kalyān Mahal—on the site of the present Bikram Vilās Durbār Hall—the Daftar Khāna (Records Office), the temples (the Har Mandir and the Kārkhāna Gangā-Jal) and the royal workshops for arms, carpets, painting, etc. were grouped. Next he reached the Karan Mahal Chowk, which was surrounded by galleries (Chaubārā), the library and the public audience hall (Karan Mahal), corresponding to the Dēwān-i-‘Āmm of the Mughal palaces. From there a small door led into the Anūp Mahal Chowk with the Privy Council Hall (Anūp Mahal). This court was flanked on one side by the private rooms of the ruler (Rāi Nivās, Phūl and Chandar Mahal) and on the other by the zenāna. The zenāna had two main courts, one for the rānīs and concubines of rank, the other for the maid servants. As all these buildings were erected above the southern front, all the more comfortable and luxurious buildings were, as at Amber, built on the left, i.e. the southern side of the courts which overlooked the open country and the town, and received the fresh and cool winds coming with the monsoon from the distant ocean.

As after the death of rājā Rāi Singhji the size and resources of the state were constantly reduced, and remained again at a low level from Sujān Singhji onwards, there was no reason to renovate or extend the administrative buildings. The old zenāna courts were regarded adequate for the maid servants; and the temples did not flourish under Mughal suzerainty. Thus these parts of the Fort palaces have preserved much of their original character. On the other hand Mughal luxury invaded the state rooms in the 17th century and the zenāna in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The great audience hall was modernized early in Anūp Singhji's reign and redecorated by Gaj Singhji, and the Privy Council Hall was rebuilt by Anūp

<sup>1</sup> Local information.

<sup>2</sup> A complete, though not always clear description in 212, by Sodhi Hukm Singh who had been a hereditary court official and was still acquainted with the, since lost, tradition. The reliable part of his account goes back to Gaj Singhji, beyond that reign it needs corroboration from other evidence. See also 31, p. 48.



Singhji and renovated by Sūrat Singhji. Likewise the plan of the royal living and sleeping rooms and the quarters of the rānīs was recast by the rulers who followed Sujān Singhji; however, more than half of this extension and interior decoration of the private and zenāna rooms was the work of Gaj Singhji. When in the second quarter of the 19th century Western manners found their way into Bīkānēr, when chairs, tables, settees, etc. demanded a different type of room, the palaces were again extended above the hither too little developed buildings along the northern palace front (by Ratan, Sardār and Lāl Singhji), over the Tripoliā Gate (by Dūngar Singhji), and over the great vault south of the Ratan Parol (by Gangā Singhji), until the eastern ramparts of the Fort were again reached. Especially under Dūngar Singhji new ideas of uniform planning, and adaptation of the old rooms led to many other changes, especially uniform galleries and jāli screens to hide the innumerable irregularities caused by the complicated architectural changes of several centuries.

The still extant buildings of rājā Rāi Singhji<sup>1</sup> include the Sūraj Parol (Sun Gate), the Kārkhāna Kalān (Great Workshops), the Har Mandir (temple), the southern façade of the Sūr Mandir (shrine of Sūr Singhji), the Chaubārā and Hazūri Darwāza (Royal Entrance) and the Rāi Nivās (private rooms)—which was during later renovations divided into the Phūl Mahal, Chandar Mahal, Gaj Mandir, Dūngar Nivās and Chhattar Mahal—and the older parts of the Zenāna, especially the lower storeys round the principal zenāna court and the charming Pipaliōn-kā-Chowk. Apart from the Sūraj Parol and the Zenāna, all these buildings stand on strongly-built double vaults, such as can also be seen in the substructures of the Orchhā, Dātīā, Būndī, Udaipur, Amber and Jodhpur palaces. They were used as store rooms, kitchens, armouries, offices, etc. The main weight of the building is carried by Mughal and Gujarāti-Muslim arches, vaults and domes; and smaller niches, such as are found in the buildings of the Lodi, Sharqi and Sūri sultāns, were also introduced. For the more elegant and decorative forms, however, the Hindu "Renaissance" style, as it had developed in Gujarāt, Mālwa and Rājputānā during the 14th-16th centuries, was employed. Doors are formed by two heavy pilasters, often pierced by niches for oil lamps, and capped by a broad pentroof and a false dome or vault or a battlement frieze. Most windows are filled with Gujarāti jāli (trellis) work and crowned by a similar false vault and pentroof. Pilasters end in leaf-work capitals and bases. Columns are a modernization of the mediaeval Hindu śrīdhara type; they rise on semi-Mughal (or Sūri) bases, and their corbels support the S-shaped brackets combined with bosses so characteristic of early Rājput art. These brackets support stylobates interconnected by miniature Hindu columns, or decorated with elephant heads, elephants, peacocks, hansas, or lotus rosettes. Sometimes these animal figures are themselves used as brackets between the beamwork. At the Hazūri Gate the lintel is decorated with alternating boss-corbels and Kīrtimukha masks, and crowned by an arch of the Khilji type, the cut-out flower frieze of which grows from two kneeling elephants. At the Har Mandir, on the other hand, the wooden frame is decorated with alternating Muslim star cartouches, miniature columns, or lotus rosettes between Muslim arabesques; or it is filled with "Sāsānian" peacocks and parrots, and border motifs, which have their origin in misunderstood pot-and-foliage capitals. Lastly, the sill of the Zenāna entrance is an ardhachandra, as one would find at the cella entrance of a Hindu temple.

It is difficult to distinguish clearly between the work of Rāi Singhji and his immediate successors. As the expensive yellow Jaisalmer stone ceased to be used after the discovery of red sandstone quarries, all the buildings executed in Jaisalmer stone can with certainty be attributed to him. Nor does this conflict with the present red colour of the vaults, since they were in modern times plastered over with the tenacious red clay found near Bīkānēr, the taste of the 18th and 19th century demanding a scheme in which the white marble buildings were supported on red sandstone substructures. The Sūr Mandir is traditionally attributed to Dalpat Singh,<sup>2</sup> but he can only have completed a work already started by Rāi Singhji. The Chaubārā (galleries) of the Karan Mahal Chowk<sup>3</sup> (fig. 36) with their slim sexadecagonal

<sup>1</sup> 170, IIIA, p. 382, f.; 220 for 1918, p. 262 f. For details we have to rely on style and building-historical considerations.

<sup>2</sup> 212, p. 8 ff.

<sup>3</sup> 183, p. 52.



elephant columns, and the Hazūri Gate leading up to the court, cannot be earlier than the reigns of Dalpat, Sūr and even Karan Singhji, though they formed an integral part of Rāi Singhji's plan. For there exists a marked difference of style between them and the Jaisalmer stone buildings. The latter represent a superficial combination of heavy Mughal vault and dome construction with the pure trabeate Gujarāti-Rajput style which so strongly influenced the later architecture of Akbar; the former, like the already mentioned entrance hall to the Devidwāra, are, like 'Isā Khān's mausoleum at Thatta, definite examples of the Fathpur-Sikri manner.

The palace of Rāi Singhji is of considerable interest to the art-historian as it is one of the oldest in Rājputānā; the palaces of Chitorgarh<sup>1</sup>, Gwalior,<sup>2</sup> the Rāi Angam palace at Udaipur and the Purāna Mahal (Narsingh Mandir) and Bhagvāndās' Zenāna Mahal at Amber are earlier by a few decades. Later we can trace the same style at Hindoli (Būndī), the Taleti-kkā-Mahal at Jodhpur and the Chhattar Mahal at Būndī. Bir Singh Deo's palaces<sup>3</sup> at Orchhā and Dātīā show the transition to the pure Akbari style; and the latter proper is found in the Diwān-i'Amam of Amber,<sup>4</sup> the Karan Mahal at Udaipur and the earliest palace remains on Jodhpur Fort.

The small number of buildings erected under Rāi Singhji's successors reflects the general decline of Bikanēr State during the greater part of the 17th century. It seems, therefore, improbable that the fine durbār hall of the Karan Mahal (fig. 35) was in fact constructed during the troubled reign of Karan Singhji. For the Karan Mahal is the first monument at Bikanēr—and indeed the second-oldest in Rājputānā—in the classic Mughal taste such as it had developed between the last years of Jahāngīr and the early part of Aurangzēb's reign. It seems safe to assume that it was erected by Anūp Singhji about 1690, as a monument to the restoration and elevation of the Bikanēr rāj, and named in memory of his father, who had struggled so desperately against the pernicious onslaughts of the emperor Aurangzēb. Aurangzēb was at that time too deep in difficulties and too badly in need of Anūp Singhji's valiant support to raise objection to an innovation which half a century earlier had brought the wrath of Jahāngīr on the head of the mighty Mīrzā Rājā Jai Singh of Amber. Anūp Singhji having broken the spell, other Rājput princes were soon following his example and introducing into their states the refined art of a then bankrupt Mughal court.

As a matter of fact the Karan Mahal belongs to the same style as Anūp Singh's other additions to Bikanēr palace. That a first inspection seems to contradict this, is due to the redecoration of the Karan Mahal in the reign of Gaj Singhji, and of the Anūp Mahal under Sūrat Singhji. Now both are covered with the ornament of that rich late Rājput elaboration of the Mughal style which had been evolved especially at Jaipur, and only here and there can their original character still be traced, in all the purity of white marble and stucco and in the exquisite, economic design so characteristic of classic Mughal art.

The Karan Mahal is a somewhat smaller and simpler imitation of the Diwān-i-Khāss, Rang Mahal and Mumtāz Mahal at Delhi, and of the Khāss Mahal at Agra, with the same flat wooden ceiling resting on a broad cornice and a surrounding gallery behind a row of cusped arches, which rest on short bellied columns of the type in fashion under Aurangzēb. The decoration of the arches and part of the ceiling paintings probably belong to the original design, but the rest of the decorative panels and the throne niche were added by Gaj Singhji. The latter was again renovated in the reign of Sūrat Singhji. Whether the adjoining upper storey of the Sūr Mandir was renovated in the same style by Anūp Singhji or later, it is difficult to say.

The Anūp Mahal Chowk,<sup>5</sup> on the other hand, is a fairly broad court with panelled classic Mughal niches and cusped arches along the two long sides, which separate it from the Rāi Nivās and the Zenāna, whereas the ends are closed by an arcade and by a hall with two panelled rows of columns and cusped arches of exactly the same type as those used in the Karan Mahal. At present the impression of this hall (fig. 45) which served as Privy Council Room, is completely different from that of the Karan Mahal. This

<sup>1</sup> 71, II, pls. 170-176, figs. 360-61, pl. 28; 179; 86.      <sup>2</sup> 155, pls. 72-74; 179.  
<sup>3</sup> 86; 155; pls. 67-70; 39; 179.      <sup>4</sup> 179; 155, pl. 162.      <sup>5</sup> 31, p. 48.

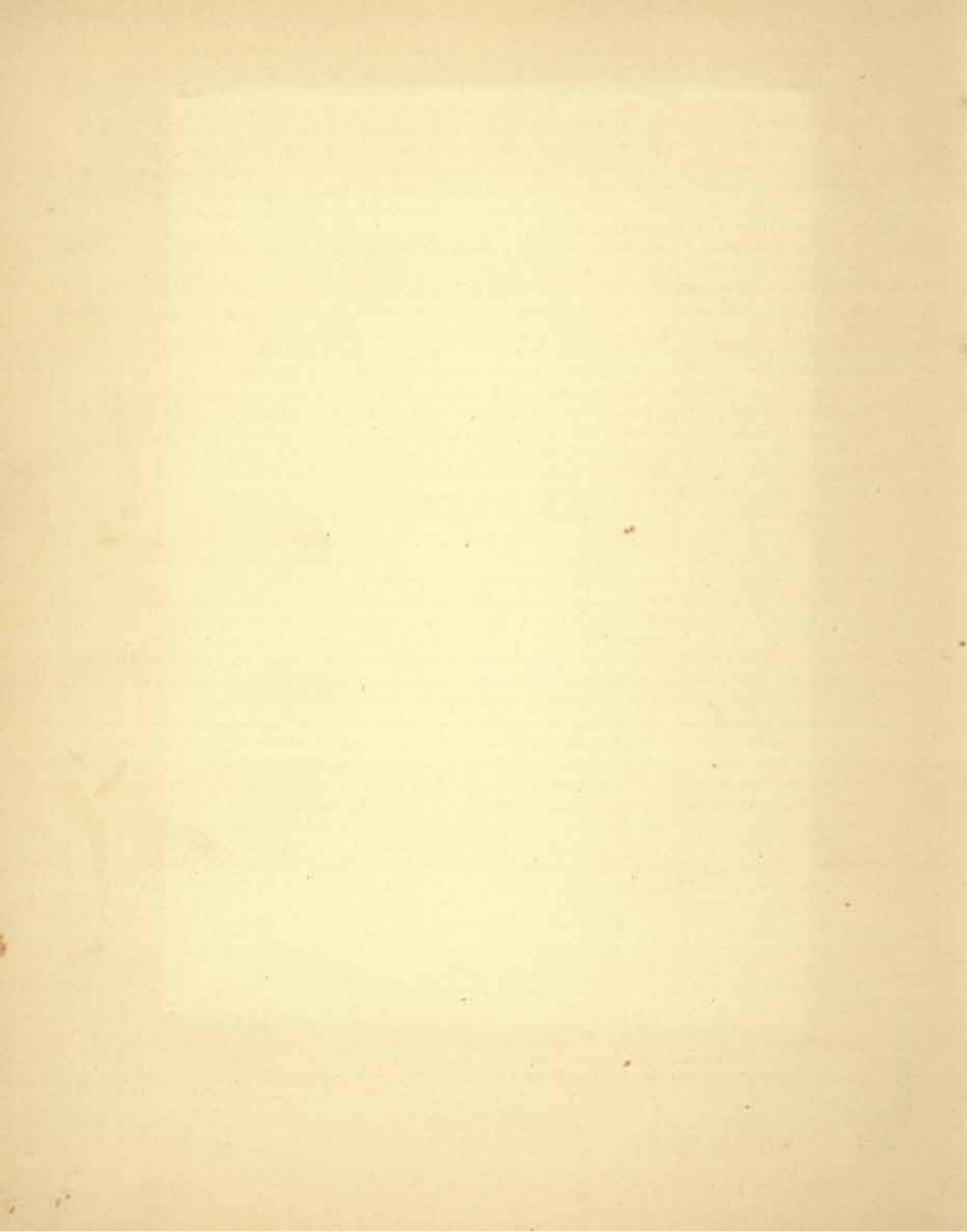




KAKUBHA RAGINI

Miniature of the reign of Mahārāja Gaj Singhji (1745-87). Lallgarh Palace, Bikanēr.







is the result of the addition of a new, closed front (fig. 46) and of the exuberant vermillion and gold gesso decoration spread over the original white marble and stucco in the reign of Sūrat Singhji.

The last building of this group is the Sujān Mahal built by mahārājā Sujān Singh on the roof of the Rāi Nivās. Its exposed position caused it to be badly damaged during the sieges of 1739 and 1808, and its renovation by mahārājā Ratan Singhji has left nothing of the original building but three beautifully painted doors (figs. 37, 38) and the marble frames into which they were set. The second inner hall of the Zenāna seems to be of the same period.

These last buildings belong to the period when the Mughal Empire was fast disintegrating, and the now independent Rājput courts were becoming the heirs of its civilization. Sawāi Jai Singh began to build the splendid new capital of Jaipur, Ajit Singh and Abhai Singh to embellish Jodhpur, Bakhat Singh Nāgaur, Amar Singh II and Sangrām Singh II Udaipur, Budh Singh, Chhattarsāl and Umēd Singh Būndī, and Bhīm Singh Kotah. Zorāwar Singhji's political difficulties and military reverses however brought building activity to a complete standstill at Bikānēr. When at last Bikānēr recovered, mahārājā Gaj Singhji must have realized how poor his capital looked when compared with Jaipur and Jodhpur. He was a shrewd observer and an erudite scholar, and his travels to Jaipur, Jodhpur and Nāthdwāra, his expedition to Hissar, and his negotiations with the Mughal court offered him ample opportunities to become acquainted with new trends and fashions. During this time the Mughal court was, under the irresponsible Ahmad Shāh, falling into complete helplessness and poverty, and Delhi was plundered alternately by its own ministers and the Marāthas and Afghāns. Even that residue of artistic life which had survived into the last years of Muhammad Shāh and the beginning of Ahmad Shāh's reign, came to an end. Jaipur and Jodhpur must have been full of skilled artists and artisans in search of a patron, people from Dehli and Lahore who could not be absorbed, and local people who had been superseded by more fashionable refugees. Others also came probably direct from Lahore to Bikānēr via Bhatner. Gaj Singhji took quite a number of them into his service.<sup>1</sup>

His building schemes had to make good the neglect of half a century. The new fortifications around Bikānēr City have already been mentioned. His charming hunting seat<sup>2</sup> at Gajner was wantonly destroyed in 1808 by the Jodhpur troops and the site remained a deserted ruin until the reign of Sardār Singhji. In Bikānēr Fort Gaj Singhji completely overhauled and enlarged the palace. This could only be done by rebuilding or renovating the already existing structures,<sup>3</sup> since the situation of the palace compound, having fortifications on three sides and the overcrowded northern court on the fourth, and the strict division between state, administrative, private and zenāna courts hardly permitted any expansion.

The royal household needed more offices, greater workshops and a better kitchen. These purposes the Kalyān Mahal, which is now demolished but originally stood on the site of the present Bikram Bilās Hall, and the renovation of the Kārkhāna Kalān, the Rasorā (kitchen) and the Kārkhāna Gangā-Jal (store room for the holy Ganges water) had to serve. All are of little architectural interest. Then the state rooms had to be improved. The Karan Mahal (durbār hall) was provided with a throne niche<sup>4</sup> and covered with Mughal painted ornament in a style fundamentally identical with, but much richer, more involved and colourful than the classic designs of the 17th and early 18th centuries. The floral mouldings of the bellied columns and the scallops of the arches were set off by red and gold borders, the leafwork on top of the columns, between the arches, was gilded, the wall dados and gallery ceilings covered with a network of garlands, bouquets, vases and bowls filled with flowers, and the cornice with other flower arrangements in and around oval cartouches. The entrance to the Privy Council room, the Anūp Mahal Chowk, finally received a marble door, the Khāss Deodhi.

Next, the princes and ladies had to be provided with more commodious quarters. For this purpose the Rāj Mahal and the Kanwar-Pade-kā Mahal on the north side of the Karan Mahal Chowk were

<sup>1</sup> 164, p. 65; local tradition; style evidence. <sup>2</sup> Gajmandir miniature 1760 and miniature DN 3 show only the terrace and the view on the lake.

<sup>3</sup> From here onward the history of Bikānēr Fort Palace in 212 proves completely reliable.

<sup>4</sup> Only archaeological evidence and the outside view on a contemporary miniature (DN 51) in Lallgarh Palace.



renovated and covered with wall paintings in the Mughal style, and the Zorāwar Mahal was built in the Meena Deodhi Chowk. Rooms were also built for the principal mahārānīs and painted in a similar style. For the many other rānīs, concubines, maidservants, dancing girls and musicians accommodation had also to be found. Some of the old halls of the zenāna were divided into several less high storeys, and other storeys were constructed on the roof of the zenāna, thus creating a maze of bewildering staircases and innumerable apartments consisting of one or two living rooms, a toilet and a kitchenette. Most of these apartments are very small. The better ones have painted ornaments on the walls, occasionally, a Rādhā-Krishna picture, some small boards and lamp niches; the best have a bay in one of the two "towers" of the Zenāna, with pleasant jāli windows looking out over the great Fort court and garden. The apartments of the principal mahārānīs consist of halls and galleries decorated with ornamental paintings and mirrors<sup>1</sup>.

Ampler accommodation demanded also those other comforts which the Mughal emperors had introduced in their palaces already in the 16th and 17th centuries. In the Badal Mahal the jets of several fountains kept the air cool during the oppressive summer heat of the Thar Desert; in the winter a Hammām refreshed the ruler and his courtiers with a hot bath. Above the Hammām a small swimming pool (Chachaukiā) was constructed for the ladies. It was surrounded by a gangway, hidden from the outside world by stone screens and small bays which permitted a view over the bustling life in the palace courts; it was open to the sky and was covered with a tentroof during the hot hours of the day. Finally a large garden (Gajpat Vilās) was laid out in the middle of the Fort compound. It was opposite the Zenāna and the ladies were able to enjoy themselves on the terraces of two garden pavilions.

The decoration of these buildings is tasteful but, as mass-produced elaboration of the late Mughal style, not of any great interest. The Zorāwar Mahal and the Chachaukiā, which were built of richly carved red sandstone, repeat the contemporary Jodhpur architecture. All the then known refinements and luxuries of architecture and the decorative arts were, of course, lavished on the private apartments (Gaj Mahal or Gaj Mandir) of Gaj Singhji and of his two chief queens, Phūl Kaur and Chand Kaur. This fairy world was built into the former Rāi Nivās under the supervision of an architect whom the mahārājā had personally brought from Jaipur.<sup>2</sup> As in the Mughal palaces, these rooms are so arranged as to serve either as public rooms or as part of the zenāna.

Those on the groundfloor open through a door and gallery into the Karan Mahal, through an open vestibule into the Anūp Mahal Chowk, or through the Rāi Nivās into the zenāna. The Chandar Mahal (named after rānī Chand Kaur of Jaisālmēr and sometimes called also Chandan Mahal), is a comparatively small room with four doors and with a vaulted wooden ceiling which, like the boss brackets on top of the pilasters, dates from the reign of Rāi Singh. The walls are covered with elaborate Mughal niches and panels enclosed by a frame-work of marble plaster slabs, which are carved into various Mughal openwork floral designs behind which mirrors have been placed. The old double stylobate is painted over with highly stylized clouds between which parīs (apsaras) in Mughal costumes are flying. The ceiling is decorated with highly varnished flowers in a bandrum network, whereas a similar network carved from thin wooden ledges is laid over the central plafond.

This room is surrounded on three sides by an open hall (Chandar Mahal-kā Sāl). On both sides pentroof-covered doors, remains of the old Rāi Nivās, and a bay with a bangaldār roof of steep pitch and a ceiling painted with parīs flying through clouds, project from the walls. The dados of the latter are covered with a design of scaled lozenges filled with Mughal flowers. The upper part of the walls is covered with Mughal stucco pilasters and arches in low relief, encasing painted Mughal wall niches which are filled with the fantastic shapes of "Chinese" blue-and-white porcelain, mirrors in gilt stucco frames, decorated with arabesques and dragons, and doors with frames of lotus petal ornament. The pilasters are strongly painted as in the Karan and Anūp Mahals, and crowned by the gilded leafwork

<sup>1</sup> This description is based on several visits by special permission of His Highness; though no more occupied, the Zenāna is still closed to other people.

<sup>2</sup> 164; also style evidence and Lallgarh miniature DN 51.



also used in the Karan Mahal ; here, however, flowers are strewn between the ornamental leafwork, and two small *paris* support the central star flower. The shallow round arches from which sprout small leaves, are in the style of the early 19th century and are part of another renovation undertaken during the latter part of Sūrat Singhjī's reign. It was then that the many rather crude paintings on the beams of the ceiling and some of the painted doors must also have been executed. Most of these doors are, however, of Gaj Singh's time, and are the real pride of the Chandar Mahal. Their leaves are painted with alternating half-lifesize figures of Krishna the Fluteplayer and a *gopī* with gifts. Mount Govardhan is indicated in the background, and the Jumnā in the foreground. These works provide excellent examples of the revival of Rājput painting about 1750-1760.

A door connects the Chandar Mahal with the Phūl Mahal (fig. 39), named after *rānī* Phūl Kaur of Jhalañy. Though it is larger than the Chandar Mahal, it has only two doors and thus is rather dark. This shortcoming is, however, made good by the glittering mirror decoration profusely spread over all the walls. Seen as a whole, the decoration of the Phūl Mahal is rather old-fashioned and its central wall sections at least may go back to an earlier date, the reign of Sujān Singhjī, even perhaps of Anūp Singhjī. It consists of stucco panels, divided into mirrors and blind niches, in *bas-relief*, on which are painted or carved bottles, vases, cups, bowls and flowers. Small flower-shaped mirrors are placed in the framework of the central panels, or form the fillings of the bowls, vases, etc. which are carved in the centres of the niches. In some cases the outlines of the decoration are so deeply cut as to give access to genuine niches behind the thin slabs of white marble stucco. On each wall, however, the centre of the uppermost panel is occupied by the bust of a lady in *bas-relief*. She is dressed in the somewhat fantastic, half European, half Muslim costume in which between 1680 and 1720 Mughal artists used to represent Portuguese *senhoras*. The wall dados and the ceiling decoration, on the other hand, are indubitably of Gaj Singh's time. The first shows excellent mirror work, and beautiful half-naturalistic flower decorations, such as are found in the margins of Mughal miniature albums, are cut into thin slabs of marble stucco, and mirror glass is laid under the openings. Within this ornament smaller panels frame a mirror over which a thin network of stucco supports a vase carved in low relief. Finally big mirrors are set into the centre of the dados of the walls in such a way that they could be used by the ladies sitting on the floor. The paintings form a frieze around the whole cornice ; subjects are the Krishna-Līlā, Nāyikās and Rāgmālās, one subject passing into the next.

The Phūl Mahal had been built into the old Rāi Nivās. But in front of it Gaj Singhjī added a closed gallery with a *jharokhā* and some small anterooms.<sup>1</sup> Their outline follows the semi-octagonal ground-plan of the central bastion of the southern fort front on which they are built. The dados are decorated with beautiful flower pieces, incised and painted on the polished marble stucco in such a manner as to suggest costly inlay work of the type used in Agra Fort and the Tāj Mahal. Higher up the walls were painted various flower designs, and figural friezes some of which still exist, " a long panoramic hunting piece representing the royal shikaree-suwaree, or hunting train of elephants and other animals " (Capt. Boileau). But in the central gallery these paintings had later to make way for the mirror decoration and stucco-figures added by Sūrat and Ratan Singhjī; of the central *jharokhā* (bay), with its heavy *bangaldār* roof and domes, only the inner mouldings survive.

To-day the name Gaj Mahal or Mandir is applied only to the upper storey. It is reached, on one side, by two narrow staircases which lead from the Sūr Mandir and the Karan Mahal, and on the other from the Zenāna through the Sūrat Bilās (now Armoury). It consists of a court on the roof of the Karen Mahal (Gaj Mandir Chowk), once open, but surrounded with galleries in the time of Dūngar Singhjī. The arrangement of the rooms is ingenious. On top of the vaulted ceiling of the Chandar Mahal a small raised room for the *mahārājā* was constructed, open on all four sides. It is called the Cutchery (*Kacheri*) because Gaj Singhjī used to deal here with most of his administration. North of it lies a small room

<sup>1</sup> See p. 75, note 4.



(Chhotā Gaj Mandir) with a jharokhā looking down on the Anūp Mahal Chowk, which according to circumstances could be assigned to the privy councillors or the personal attendants of the ruler. South of the Cutchery is the Shish Mahal (fig. 41, 42) covering both the Phūl Mahal and its ante-rooms (Sāl) in the storey below it. It was the apartment of the rānīs and favourite concubines who from there could converse with their Lord, or watch the entertainments of an evening. On the eastern side a gallery of five arches (Panchbārāi or Gaj-Mandir kā Sāl) opened on to the court, where during the business hours officials, artists, poets and scholars could be received in private audience, and which formed the stage for dancing girls, singers and musicians during the hours of recreation. On the western side, a gallery enabled attendants and maidservants to look after the hooka, betel, sherbets and food, for the ruler and his intimate courtiers or ladies.

Whether these opulent rooms were completed during Gaj Singhji's reign, is difficult to say. In their present condition, only the Cutchery and the Chhotā Gaj Mandir can go back to Gaj Singhji's time. The latter has not much of interest to offer but the Cutchery resembles the Chandar Mahal, even to the archaic brackets and bosses of Rāi Singh's time and the stylobate paintings of clouds and parīs. The mirror decoration is also similar, though part of the work may be later—of Sūrat Singhji's time. A special feature are the four lights under the cornice where miniatures of Sūrya, Gaj-Lakshmī, Ganeśa and Mahādeva are copied on carved stucco slabs filled with pieces of coloured glass. The Shish Mahal was enlarged and redecorated in Sūrat Singhji's reign. In Gaj Singhji's time it disappeared behind the gallery (Sāl) of the Phūl Mahal and was, like the latter, covered with domes and bangaldār vaults, as is evident from a contemporary miniature.<sup>1</sup> The Panchbārāi, finally, was enlarged and closed by Sardār Singhji.

However, under Gaj Singhji's successor Sūrat Singhji the principal royal rooms were completed. Sūrat Singhji was also a great builder and patron of the arts. The extension of Bikānēr Fort, with the Sūrat and Dhārū (Singh) Parols, and of the Deshnok Temple the fortification of Sūratgarh, Bhatner-Hanumāngarh, and Nohar and the erection of the Dhūnīnāth Temple have already been mentioned. To the Fort palaces he added the Rang Mahal and Ānand Biji Mahal (the upper storeys of the Anūp Mahal), the Sūrat Bilās between the latter and the Gaj Mandir, and the open galleries along the fronts of the Phūl and Karan Mahals. He enlarged and renovated the Anūp Mahal and had the anteroom (Sāl) of the Phūl Mahal and the Shish Mahal completely, and the vestibule of the Chandar Mahal partly redecorated.

This type of architecture differs in many ways from that of his great predecessor, and represents a late style. Mughal and Mughal-Rājput influence had come to an end. Such outside influence as is still apparent came from the Jodhpur of Mahārājā Bijai and Mān Singh. Quite a number of new forms can in fact be traced to Mān Singh's palaces on Jodhpur Fort or to the late Jodhpur Temples, e.g. the Bhattiyānji Rānikā Mandirs or the Tiji-Māji shrine. But in contrast with Gaj Singhji's reign, contacts with the outside world were rather unimportant, and the stylistic development of the art of Bikānēr under Sūrat Singhji is mainly of an autonomous character. There was on the one side an elegant elaboration of the heritage of Gaj Singhji, nervous, dynamic and very sensitive; on the other, a re-emergence of popular tendencies and elements of style which seemed to have been forgotten since the middle of the 17th century. As we have already seen, these traditions continued in use at the seats of the vassal rājās and thākurs, and were now brought back by assistants and apprentices drawn from those places.

The architecture of this time as it appears in the galleries of the southern palace façade and the three storeys of the Anūp, Rang and Ānand Biji Mahals, (fig. 46) has the involved elegance, but not the playful light-ness and frivolity of the "Rococo." The monumental pillars have been superseded by small and slender columns, often engaged or coupled, or even joined together by small window screens. Arches are provided with so many shallow cusps that they appear almost round, oval, pointed, or shallow, according to the changing proportions of the window or door; sometimes they are even broken up into

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Lallgarh miniature DN 51. Cp. 168; 95; 101; 96; 16



diminutive trefoil cusps. The pentroofs have been reduced and balanced by cartouche and blind niche panels; the bangaldār roofs swing in light semi-circles; the engaged domes and vaults above are now merely indicated. The jāli-screens, often subdivided into window panes, are now a delicate lace work in marble. Reappearing archaic forms are the "Pathān" and early Mughal battlement friezes and the early Rājput brackets and bosses supporting balconies in close-set groups. An innovation is the shallow round arch set with fine leafwork. It is a type which had first developed in Muhammad Shāh's Qudsiā Bāgh<sup>1</sup> at Delhi as an adaptation of the outline of real or engaged bangaldār pentroofs, the leafwork being a Hindu interpretation of the "rope" borders of Timurid-Persian architecture, reduced to miniature size. Sometimes this round arch is slightly trifoliated or expanded into a miniature cross-vault. Façades are irregular, broken up into doorways, windows and shallow bays, in an intermittent, swelling and relaxing rhythm.

The same restless and overelaborate prettiness also affects all interior decoration, of which there are two types—the gold and vermilion varnished gesso work of the Anūp Mahal, and the lace-like mirror and gilt stucco work of the Shish Mahal and of the anteroom (Sāl) of the Phul Mahal. In principle it brings nothing new. The individual motifs are the same as those of classic Mughal art, and include decorative niches, cartouches, leafwork, flower arrangements, often in vases and bowls, and flower arabesques of the type already in favour on the book margins of the 16th and 17th centuries. But the effect is completely different. As in late Chinese or Japanese ceramic art, the motifs have lost their individual quality and have become mere links in a very complicated lacelike decoration. Arches, niches, cartouches, star medallions and borders, serve to organize into a definite pattern the minor ornament and flower motifs, the rich colours of which make an almost uniform glittering background.

In the Anūp Mahal (fig. 45) this effect is achieved by reducing everything to a gold lace-work spread over a vermilion ground. Accents are effected by slightly raising the relief, by replacing the vermilion background with a glowing green, blue and violet, by motifs treated completely in gold, and by mirrors and mirror or glass mosaic. The richest gilt reliefs are found between the arches on top of the columns (fig. 50). They show the same leafwork which had already been used in Gaj Singhji's time in the Karan Mahal and the vestibule of the Chandar Mahal. But by a multiplication of the leaves and flowers the impression of a hill covered with jungle is now obtained, on which are depicted Lakshmī, Vishnu, a Śiva Linga, Krishna with the gopis, and other subjects. The glass mosaics (fig. 49)—executed by Jaipur artists—show Rāma and Sītā in domed pavilions and surrounded by Lakshmana, Hanumān and other loyal followers. All this was done by modelling the decorations in the local tenacious clay, so well suited for this purpose, over the dados, real and blind niches and arches of the old Anūp Mahal and of the elegant throne canopy built into it for Sūrat Singhji. The groundwork was then painted and gilded and finally well varnished.<sup>2</sup> At the side doors near the front of the Anūp Mahal a different decoration is employed. As Sūrat Singhji enlarged the hall by another arcade (with richly carved wooden doors), the blind arcades of the court front of the Rāi Nivās had to be covered. The space between its arches and the new doors was decorated with highly stylized paintings of cranes flying through the clouds and rain of the monsoon.<sup>3</sup>

In the Shish Mahal (figs. 41-42) the mirror work of the Chandar Mahal and of Gaj Singh's Cutchery is repeated, with, however, the same change in taste which we have already seen in the Anūp Mahal. It has become a lacework of an extremely rich and delicate, and yet uniform character. The structural organization of the walls is achieved by shifting the accent as between the marble-stucco slabs and the mirror glass. In the dados, door frames and the cornice the first predominate, the mirrors merely forming the background of the open-work ornament, giving the effect of paintings. In the borders of panels and niches stucco and glass are kept in balance. On the rest of the wall only thin stucco ledges cover the mirrors, either in distinct borders or playfully gliding over the glass, half naturalistic and yet unreal, like

<sup>1</sup> 58, 1st series, pl. 3; 60, pl. 66.

<sup>2</sup> The technique has been revived by the efforts of Col. T. T. Hendley, as a decoration of bottles, vases, etc., but no longer compares with the splendour of the old work. Cp. 111 and 31, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> 49, pl. 8; 236, p. 170.



Roman or Renaissance "Grottesques" or wall decorations by Cuvillés, Ranson, Watteau or Boucher. And characteristic enough, there is the same predilection for broken curves and loops, and even for the transition from mere wall decoration to ornamental statues detaching themselves from the wall. In the European Rococo these are putti and angels, in the Rājput Rococo young girl attendants, as in the niches of the Shish Mahal or in the Mādho-Nivās at Jaipur.<sup>1</sup>

This play with sculptural figures is even more pronounced in the anteroom (Sāl) of the Phūl Mahal (fig. 44) the redecoration of which must have been begun under Sūrat Singhji but was possibly completed only under his successor Ratan Singhji, who used this gallery as his sleeping room. The simple and trifoliated oval arches have now become the rule. The mirror work reveals a marked falling-off of artistic inspiration, being reduced to four standard patterns; running creeper for the border, broken bandrūm lozenges for the wall surfaces, genuine flower arabesques for the groins and fish scales for the backgrounds of the niches. The real emphasis lies on the stucco sculptures, which represent mythological groups, an idealized Bhadrināth mountain scenery, and translations of contemporary Rājput paintings into the third dimension, perhaps inspired by the dolls used on the occasion of the Tij, Gaurī, and other festivals (fig. 43).

The architecture and interior decoration of Sūrat Singhji's reign permitted of no further development. Refinement and elaboration had reached their limit; and this very elaboration was already a sign of the general devaluation of all original forms and of a relapse into mannerism. At home when the Pax Britannica had made an end to the struggle for survival, stimulus was lacking, and new inspirations from outside were slow to percolate through the boundless vastness of India. Thus art began to degenerate, endlessly repeating the old traditional forms, which lost more and more of their former delicacy of detail, balance of pattern, and carefulness of technical execution. There were even occasional essays in new forms, but they never went beyond superficial "exotic" imitations inspired by the whim of some ruler, and were never serious experiments in a new approach to the fundamental problems of art.

Quantitatively, building activity flourished. Sūrat Singhji's successor, Ratan Singhji, added the Daftar-ki-Kotri, the Ganpat Nivās and the water pavilion in the Karan Mahal Chowk to the Fort Palace, the Bikam Nivās, Sūrat Bilās and Kothī Lakhmī Bilās to its Zenāna, renovated the rest of the Rāi Nivās and the Sujān Mahal, completed the decoration of the anteroom (Sāl) of the Phūl Mahal, and had the ceiling of the vestibule (Sāl) of the Chandar Mahal painted. But of all these new or renovated apartments only the Rāi Nivās and the water-pavilion are worth mentioning because of their perfect decoration of white marble panels, doors and bays with bangaldār roofs, carefully imitating the style of Gaj Singhji.

Then mahārājā Sardār Singhji added the Ratan Nivās, the Moti Mahal and the top storeys of the zenāna to the Fort palace, enlarged and redecorated part of the Gaj Mandir, and renovated the Kanwar Pade-kā-Mahal therein; he built also the Ratan Parol, the Topkhāna (artillery stores) and some minor quarters in the southern extension of the Fort, and finally the Sardār Nivās Palace at Gajner. The Ratan Nivās, on top of the Sūr Mandir, represents another late imitation of the late (Delhi-Faizabād) Mughal style of Gaj Singhji's reign. The hall of the Gaj Mandir was doubled in a manner similar to the Anūp Mahal, but its decoration is rather crude and gaudy. Some pleasant paintings are also found on the central beam supporting the ceiling of the Moti Mahal. Sardār Singhji's other buildings in the Fort can be recognized from the regular sets of small rectangular jāli windows and bays in red sandstone, the architectural details (railings, columns, arches, pentroofs and bangaldār roofs) of which have been reduced to mere indications of their true nature. The same can be said of Sardār Nivās at Gajner. After Gaj Singhji's hunting seat had been destroyed during the siege of 1808, Sardār Singh thought it wise to construct the new building as a fort, the more as during these years of internal disorganization there was a real danger from robbers and raiders. It is an impressive though simple building. Four wings

<sup>1</sup> 121, vol. 2, pl. 50.



with octagonal corner towers surround a high central court. Access is obtained through a rather small entrance; the two to three naves of the long galleries partly open on that court, partly look down on the gardens through small bays and rectangular windows, all closed with delicate, but very conventional trellis screens. When Dūngar Singh enlarged the Gajner palaces, Sardār Nivās became first the royal zenāna and then the palace of the heir apparent; and balconies and galleries in the style of the Rasikīromaniji Temple at Bīkānēr and even a European west gallery were added.

Under Dūngar Singhji, Bīkānēr architecture had reached its lowest ebb, and the disintegration of the old style began. Dūngar Singhji's reforms were part of a new, wider outlook and at the same time inaugurated a new mode of life. This new outlook was the result of an increasing contact with British India and with other Indian states. It implied a new ideal of a well-ordered public and private life, and new ideas both of the wealth of Indian tradition and of Western art. It inspired a better administration, peace and security and the beginning of a change in social life. Not only more administrative buildings, but also palace rooms for a half-western style of life, with tables, chairs, cupboards, etc. proved necessary. They were no longer strictly barricaded against the outside world, but let in light and air. To this finally came a desire to bring some order into the random pile of the Palace, to fill in the gaps, to balance the fronts around the courts and to standardize the façades.

The completion of the north-eastern section of the Fort palace, the Ganpat Nivās, the old Gangā Nivās (fig. 52), the Son and Chinī Burj, the Dūngar Nivās (on the vaults of the Tripoliā or Dūsubh Gate) and the new Gangā Nivās (extending over the Ratan Parol and Great Vault to the eastern Fort walls) created a uniform northern front from the Zenāna to beyond the Sūraj Parol, and provided state rooms in the new, half-Western style. The gaps round the Anūp Mahal Chowk were filled with the Dalāl and Lakhmī Vilās, that between the Gaj Mandir and Sūr Mandir by open galleries, that between the Karan Mahal Chowk and Mana Deodhi Chowk by the galleries of the Dalpat, Lunkīran, Narpāt and Jait Nivās, and that to the East of the latter court by the completion of the Kalyān Mahal (later replaced by the monumental Bikram Bilās). However, this closure of the palace fronts had an undesirable effect on the natural ventilation of the royal apartments, especially in the hot season. Thus Dūngar Singhji had another set of royal sleeping rooms constructed on top of the Gaj Mandir: the Kothī and Kamrā Dūngar Nivās and the Chhattar Mahal, part of which at least were built into some neglected tower rooms of the Rāi Nivās. Finally some other rooms were redecorated, especially on the zenāna side of the Anūp Mahal Chowk, the Sardār Mandir and Sardār Nivās (a summer retreat with water cooling) and the Kamrā Gulāb Nivās. The southern Fort extension was also completed, pavilions built into the towers, the Dhārū Parol enlarged with galleries and balconies, and the Sheo Nivās Garden laid out, with the Sheo Bilās pavilion.

The additions round the Anūp Mahal and Karan Mahal Chowks wisely retained the traditional style. Though they were constructed merely in red sandstone, their execution is rich and follows, on the whole, the nervous taste of Sūrat Singh's rooms. On the other hand, new experiments were tried in the receding apartments on top of the palace and in the new wings along the Mīna Deodhi Chowk and round the Gangā Nivās Chowk, although even here the old architectural tradition was preserved wherever aesthetic uniformity demanded it. These experiments followed two lines. One was the introduction of European tiles.<sup>1</sup> A jharokhā was built into the chaubārā of the Sūr Mandir, (fig. 36) of the traditional type, but constructed entirely of English tiles which had already been acquired by Ratan Singhji. They had been made by a Staffordshire firm, S. Hughes & Co. which flourished at Cobridge in the second quarter of the 19th century. Apart from pseudo-Chinese ornaments they are painted with various scenes, romantic, oriental, classical, Gothic, even pictures of Christ Church, Oxford. In the interior of the Chhattar Mahal, on the other hand, oval fish strainers, such as are still found among the palace crockery, were cut and used as wall tiles within a mirror-and-stucco decoration, which was

<sup>1</sup> A tile was taken out for investigation; for the firm see 122a, p. 479. Old Dutch and Portuguese tile work, of the early 18th century, is found as wall lining in Udaipur Palace.



otherwise carefully copied from the Shish Mahal. For its exterior decoration plain, deep-blue tiles were used, as for the now demolished Chīnī Burj. The effect, is however, unsatisfactory, as the rather portentous and obtrusive effect of the deep-blue tiles clashes with the simple, unpretentious garden pavilion type of the building. The other line of architectural experiment was an odd attempt in the Kothī and Kamrā Dūngar Nivās, in the old Gangā Nivās (fig. 52) and in the court of the new Gangā Nivās, to imitate European Renaissance architecture, apparently studied from foreign prints. The local artisan, of course, completely misunderstood the Italian columns, capitals, cornices, pediments, flower garlands, etc., and adapted them as far as possible to his own decorative convention. The result reminds one strongly of similar experiments in the Russia of Ivan the Terrible. The wall paintings which commemorate the first impressions of railways, ships and horse carriages, then wonders to the inhabitants of the Thar desert, are quaint but are painted in a vivid and primitive folk style. For the interior decoration of the palace, however, the traditional style of painting was retained. The wooden ceiling (fig. 48) of the Chhattar Mahal bears a Raslilā frieze in a framework of oval cartouches, such as it is found also on the cupolas of the late chhatris. Though the general effect is charming, closer investigation reveals the fast degeneration of the style. The doll-like figures have been drawn with the help of a few standard stencils, with merely a few changes in the positions of the arms and the musical instruments. The ornament on the other hand has been highly elaborated, partly under contemporary European influence. In the Sardār Nivās and Sardār Mandir the old scenes of clouds and flying parīs of the Anūp Mahal and Chandar Mahal are repeated, but the execution has become as crude and lifeless as on the ceiling of the Chhattar Mahal. The life-size portrait of Sardār Singh is an enlarged copy of a miniature, which was probably based on a coloured photograph of that ruler. Mahārājā Gangā Singhji, abandoned all these experiments. His earlier buildings, such as the durbār hall in Gangā Nivās, Lallgarh Palace, or Dūngar Nivās at Gajner,<sup>1</sup> content themselves with repeating, often with excellent taste, the revivalist architecture and architectural decoration evolved under his elder brother. But the degeneration of all forms could not be halted and indeed was rather accelerated by the reforms of Sir Swinton Jacob. Rājput architecture is still flourishing at Bīkānēr, but it has become a mere variety of the revivalist architecture<sup>2</sup> sponsored by the Anglo-Indian schools of art towards the end of the 19th century.

### 5. *Tanks and Gardens*

In a desert where water is a rarity, the tank and the garden are as much a luxury as the palace. All over Rājputānā we find beautiful garden palaces, generally on the dams of artificial lakes, over-looking on one side the glittering water sheet, on the other the verdant opulence of an irrigated garden, with canals, basins, waterfalls and water-jets and, further away, a deer park. But even for this there is hardly an opportunity in the flat sand desert of Bīkānēr. Though practically every village is situated near a depression (sar) where the water of occasional monsoon rains accumulates, it has to rely, for its water supply, on the deep wells which reach the not inconsiderable water resources of the sub-soil through a layer of several hundred feet of rock. A very early tank lies at Badopal in the Ghaggar Valley, surrounded by ghāts of exceptionally large bricks. The other tanks worth mentioning, of Gajner, Kolāyat, Devikund and Sheobāri, all depend on dams; for the depressions wherein they are situated, form part of the shallow nullas crossing the desert from the Panjāb and the Aravallis towards the Hakrā or Runn of Cutch. The period from the 15th to the early 17th century had been one of intensive construction, and many memorial stones mention such charitable works. But it was only at Gajner that a hunting seat and rich gardens were built by mahārājā Gaj Singhji, apparently in imitation of the tanks and gardens which he had seen in Mārwar, Mewār and Jaipur. As already mentioned, this palace was destroyed during the siege of 1808. The present palaces and gardens, including the complicated canal system which spreads over a vast catchment area are the work of Sardār Singhji, Dūngar Singhji and Gangā Singhji.

<sup>1</sup> 31, p. 43.    <sup>2</sup> 31.



At Bīkānēr all the gardens depend on wells. The great Sūr Sāgar, constructed by Sūr Singhji<sup>1</sup>, was already in the 17th century surrounded by the same trees as now, but had no garden. The principal garden outside the Fort was the Anūp Sāgar, laid out by mahārājā Anūp Singhji to the south-east of the Fort. It depended on a gigantic well, which is all that remains of the garden and supplies part of the water for the city. Fortunately representations of it are seen in the background of several old miniatures<sup>2</sup> (figs. 84, 85). It was a large Mughal chār-bāgh, embellished with basins, waterjets and canals, enclosed by a high wall, and overlooked by a tower of four or five storeys. For this last reason it was used as an artillery position during the siege of 1739, but not seriously damaged. But during the siege of 1808, when Gajner palace was destroyed, the Anūp Sāgar garden also disappeared. The other garden was the Sheo Nivās (Gaj Sāgar.<sup>3</sup>) Its vine arcades, bowers and flower beds spread along the foot of the Fort bastions just beneath the palaces, and could be reached through a gate under the Rāi Nivās. After it had been included in the southern palace extension, Dūngar Singhji provided it with a garden pavilion, the Deo Bilās. This pavilion is a rather heavy structure, on a platform with water basins and flower beds between the stone paths. Its round central chamber is surrounded by an octagonal gallery on heavy pilasters with coupled columns and trifoliated shallow arches surmounted by a sequence of broken bangaldār pentroofs which were crowned by a low central dome. The walls are covered with Rādhā-Krishna medallions and conventional clouds. With its opulent vegetation and palm trees it is a little fairy land in the midst of a sandy desert.

Formerly the inner palace courts, the Karan Mahal Chowk and the Gaj Mandir Chowk, also had flower gardens. All that remains now is the Badal Mahal in the Karan Mahal Chowk,<sup>4</sup> a marble pavilion in the middle of a marble basin where the ruler could enjoy the warm summer evenings amidst the murmuring play of the many water jets. It was constructed by Gaj Singhji, though the embankment of the basin forms part of recent repairs. Gaj Singhji also laid out the other great garden in the Fort, the Gajpat Vilās. It is also a chār-bāgh of the Mughal type, with two pavilions, the other Badal Mahal and the Nāth-Karan-Girji-kā-Mahal. Unfortunately it was later completely recast. Of the original buildings the western entrance pavilion and the substructures of the Badal Mahal alone remain. The quaint bulbous supports under the terrace corners of the latter recur in other buildings of the late 18th century. e.g. in the Hazūribāgh Darwāza of Lahore Fort and the interior gate of the Hawā Mahal at Jaipur. The groundfloor of the Badal Mahal is in the style of Ratan Singhji's last years, the upper storey in that of Sardār Singhji, whereas the present European garden and southern entrance are of recent origin.

## 6. *Private Houses*

As usual, private architecture followed the model set by the rulers. The feudal structure of Rājput society encouraged the building of stately mansions for the great sardārs, thākurs and ministers as well as for wealthy Jain and Hindu merchants and even well-to-do brahmin landholders, moneylenders and managers. Most of these houses are not very large. Those in the smaller towns belong to a middle class of modest resources; those in Bīkānēr City were hemmed in by the fortifications and thus forced to pile storey upon storey. The exterior of most of these houses is rather plain; only the entrance, and some windows and bays in the upper storey are richly carved. Within, the carvings are spread over the colonnades and galleries round one or two narrow courts, but the rooms behind them are again of a rather puritan simplicity. It is only in very modern merchants' houses that we find that petty overelaboration so common in the late private architecture of Mārwar.

<sup>1</sup> 35, p. 18 ff., ascribes it to Sūrat Singh, other sources are silent; but the Lallgarh miniature showing Karan Singh in a boat on the Sūr Sāgar proves that it had in fact been excavated already by Sūr Singh.

<sup>2</sup> 212, p. 7; miniatures DR 90, DR 18 and uncatalogued ones. Nothing certain is known of its disappearance but it seems probable that it was destroyed at the same time as Gajner and the demolition of Devikund.

<sup>3</sup> In the foreground on the just mentioned miniatures; gate on Chandar Mahal-kā Sāl painting and vestiges in wall, 212, p. 8 ff. and information from P.W.D.

<sup>4</sup> See miniatures, note 2 above.



## THE ARCHITECTURE OF BIKANER

Bikānēr Town<sup>1</sup> (e.g. the house of Śrīkrishna-Dās and in Banthiyā Chowk and Natha Chowk), Tārānagar, and some other places still preserve quite a number of old houses of the late 16th and early 17th centuries. As in the early palaces of Bikānēr Fort the entrance lies between two broad pilasters with lamp niches, under a broad pentroof with a battlement balustrade. The wooden doorframes and leaves are of the same type as those of the Har Mandir court in the palace, and closely related to the so-called "Akbari doors" of Old Lahore and to those of the Brahmor Kothī in Chambā State.<sup>2</sup> Outside Bikānēr Town this tradition has been conserved almost to the present day. For instance, in the Pāllivālā (brahmin landholders from Pālī in Mārwar) settlements round Gajner, the heavy bangaldār niches and late "Mughal" ornamentation of Gaj Singhji's and Sūrat Singhji's time strongly influence the red sandstone carvings, but the woodwork is still the same as in Rāi Singhji's reign. The banyā houses of the last half century imitate unsuccessfully the overelaborate and somewhat petty exuberance of the Jodhpur mansions of the middle 19th century. At present the tradition is rapidly degenerating. For the complete breakdown of artistic taste in India during the Victorian period with all its fondness for the discarded tinsel of the West has now reached the mercantile class of Bikānēr, and houses are decorated with copies of pseudo-Gothic scroll work and grotesque "portraits" of Queen Victoria, Edward VII, etc. In the meantime modern architecture is penetrating into the new quarters of the town which are being laid out by the government.

<sup>1</sup> 35, p. 17 ff.; 212, p. 7, p. 20 f.; 164, p. 146 ff.; 183, pls. 35 ff.

<sup>2</sup> 236; 230.



## VI. THE SCULPTURE OF BĪKĀNĒR

### 1. *Mediaeval Hindu Sculpture*

Bikānēr sculpture begins with the Cāhamāna dynasty. The terracottas of the Gupta period belonged to the unknown past, once the temples of Pīr Sultān, Badopal and Rang Mahal had been razed during the Hūna-Gurjara invasions. The Cāhamāna temples were also destroyed or damaged in the course of the Muslim invasions, but the national and religious traditions, which had brought them forth, were merely submerged; and when the Rājputs recovered from the blow, the old ruins embodied the ideals from which grew another Rājput art.

This Mediaeval North-west Indian art developed under the Pratihāra dynasty of Mandor and Kanauj, but assumed its definite form after the fall of the Pratihāras, under the Gaharwārs, Cāhamānas, Paramāras, and Solankīs. This transition was the result of a complicated and so far little explored amalgamation and reinterpretation of late Gupta and indigenous elements by a new society of half-barbarian conquerors, in the light of a new conception of Hindu religion, stern, full of awe, magic and primitive imagery. At first, the elegant, overelaborate late-Gupta mannerism was taken over, unquestioned.<sup>1</sup> Then, in the 8th century, a new heavy, earthbound, mighty style<sup>2</sup> breaks through, again to dissolve into an elegant court style with the decadence of the Pratihāras.<sup>3</sup> In the 10th to the 13th centuries the process was repeated. The sculpture of the following dynasties, in the middle of the 10th century a boorish imitation of late Pratihāra types, achieved a sweet, original beauty towards the end of the 10th century,<sup>4</sup> a classic maturity in the 11th century,<sup>5</sup> an elegant mannerism in the early 12th century, sinking slowly into a Baroque and Rococo overelaboration during the late 12th, 13th and, in some provinces, the early 14th centuries, before being wiped out by the Muslim invasion.

This evolution, though fundamentally the same everywhere, suffered various modifications in the different kingdoms of Northern India, reflecting, as it did, those factors of wealth and poverty, peace and war which quicken and retard social and cultural life. The Cāhamānas, however, were, in the poorest provinces of North-west India, the chief guardians of Hinduism against the advance of Islām. This gave Cāhamāna sculpture a heavy, somewhat boorish conservatism, balanced, however, by a tremendous vitality.<sup>6</sup> And of this vital, but heavy Cāhamāna style the sculptures of Bikānēr State represent a provincial variety.

To the early Cāhamāna period we may ascribe two Umā-Maheśvara groups from Pallū, and a frieze of dancers from Ratangarh Fort, all in the reddish or greyish-brown sandstone of the Aravallis. The first of these is the standing Umā-Maheśvara group now built into a niche of the Brahmani Temple at Pallū. It is a rather clumsy imitation of a common type, of which an excellent example is found in the Himmatnagar Museum. Inamdar<sup>7</sup> has ascribed it to the 8th century, but it is probably of later date. The relief at Pallū differs slightly from the usual type. Pārvati leans with her right arm on the great god, her upper left hand holding a cornucopia, flower or snake instead of the child. Gāneśa has been replaced by a gana, and the position of the richly undercut halo is unusually low. The feet are lost. The other group, in the Bikānēr Museum (fig. 8), shows Śiva sitting on Nandi, with Pārvati on his lap, and accompanied by a small figure of Brahmā. The sculpture is carefully finished, but the modelling is poor and shows that the piece had been superficially copied from a superior work at Ajmer, Śākambharī or some other centre of Cāhamāna culture. The dancer group from Ratangarh (fig. 7), on the other hand, is a small masterpiece. Rather simple like the preceding pieces, it breathes the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 53 note 1.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 53 note 3.

<sup>3</sup> Himmatnagar Museum, Rodā temples, Kārwan stelae, etc.

<sup>4</sup> The stylistic development of Mediaeval Hindu sculpture is so far hardly explored. My observations here are based mainly on Gujarāt and Southern Rājputānā; but my researches in North Rājputānā, Central India and the North Western Deccan, though incomplete, corroborate this outline.

For the late 10th century, c.f. 119, figs. 14 and 54a, pls. 12 f, 42, 52 f.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. the back of the Modherā sun temple. Most of the Rudramālā Temple at Siddhpur, erected by Jayasinha Siddharājā (1094-1142) must go back to a reconstruction after the Muslim invasion of 1197. Cp. also 184.

<sup>6</sup> 127, p. 107 ff.; 158 (discusses also the preceding Cāhamāna remains); 129; 44, pls. 8-9 (?).

<sup>7</sup> 119, pl. V, fig. 11.



very joy of life. The figures are rather short, though one of them may actually have been intended to represent a dwarf. But the modelling is excellent, the postures well balanced, the rhythm and counter-rhythm of the dancing boys and girls perfect.

The second phase of Cāhamāna sculpture, from the middle of the 11th to the 12th century, is chiefly represented by the Susānī Temple at Morkhāna. Its exact date is not known, as the inscription of Sonī Devā, 1172 (fig. 12), refers not to its foundation but merely to a donation. Analysis of style is not very helpful, as such provincial works tend to preserve earlier and later elements side by side, which is here the case. Thus the cella entrance combines features of the late Pratihāra period (capitals, lintel, jambs and details of the sill) with others (the dwārapālas, chaurībearers and their niches) which cannot be earlier than the late 11th century. The cella façades display degenerate Gavāksha ornaments of a comparatively early type by the side of 11th century arch motifs. The figures are rather plain, as in 11th century art, but tending towards the slim elegance and exaggerated poses of the 12th century. The groups in the three principal niches round the shrine reveal the style at its best. The mighty image of the Devī sitting on her lion (fig. 11) is an expressive masterpiece. From an iconographical point of view, it is closely related to the Jain images of Ambikā. But Ambikā herself was borrowed by the Jains from Śāktism<sup>1</sup>; and the type, though most common in Jain art, is Western Indian. It can first be traced on the coins of the Gupta emperors and appears also in the Pratihāra Śaivite temples of Rodā in Idar State (late 8th century). Thus it seems that the Susānī Temple was built before the invasion of Muhammad Bāhalīm and completed, after his fall, in the reign of Ārnorājā.

Probably some minor sculptures at Pallū, dwārapālas and surasundarīs of elegant workmanship, and an architectural fragment (part of a shrine entrance) with similar figures, lying at Gosaino near Pallū, belong to the same period.

Most of the Pallū sculptures, however, especially those transferred to the Bikānēr Museum, come from Jain temples of the late Cāhamāna period. Unlike the sculptures so far discussed they are works not of the Cāhamāna, but of the Solankī style of Gujarāt, which since the reigns of Jayasimha Siddharājā (1094-1144) and Kumārapāla (1144-1173) had made its way into Rājputānā. Artistic exports of this sort were common. The Cāhamāna style, for example, was imported into Vāghelā Gujarāt by Cāhamāna refugees at Pāwāgadh.<sup>2</sup> The Gujarāt style, on the other hand, was carried to the north by the traders of the Jain community, whose protector Kumārapāla had been.<sup>3</sup>

Amongst these "Gujarātī" sculptures are the greatest masterpieces of Mediaeval Indian art found in Bikānēr State; both are slightly differing statues (figs. 9-10) of the Jain goddess Sarasvatī<sup>4</sup> (three quarters life size), in polished white marble and show the goddess in a benevolent, dreamy mood. She has four arms, with one hand open and the others holding a water vessel, a palmleaf book and a lotus flower. She stands on an open lotus, and at her feet are the miniature figures of the donor and his wife. She is accompanied by two other manifestations of herself, each playing a vīnā, and by heavenly musicians and other flying godlings. Both sculptures are enclosed by detachable, richly ornamented frames, which consist of an arch resting on columns. These slim columns which end in a simple pot-and-foilage (pūrnakalāśa) capital, flow into four arched niches, each enclosing the image of a Parivara Devata, accompanied by attendants in oblong panels. The uppermost niche is flanked by elephants with their mahouts, which again bear rampant vyālis. The bracket on top of the capitals is shaped like the chapel of the Tīrthan-kara (his identification is not certain), from which spring makaras the central ones of which carry the great arch filled with deities flying towards another, crowning chapel. All these details reveal the mature Solankī style, such as it had developed in the reign of Jayasimha Siddharājā (1094-1143): the breaking up of the columns into small niches and panels, the chapel brackets, the slightly pointed arch with

<sup>1</sup> Or more correctly, Ambikā was, together with other mother goddesses, absorbed simultaneously into Hinduism and Jainism. Gp. 21 note 4.

<sup>2</sup> H. Goetz, Pāwāgadh-Champaner, (J. Gujarat Res. Soc. XI, p. 51 ff., 1949).

<sup>3</sup> It likewise penetrated Sind, cp. 54, pl. 14 (Brāhmanābād), fig. 3 (Nagar Parker), pl. 35 (echo in the Thatha chattrīs).

<sup>4</sup> 31, p. 78; 127, p. 84 f., pl. 34, fig. 84 (the misquotation Palta goes back to the A.S.I. Report, the date is too early). A Vishnu head from the same studio collected in Gujvat (exact place unfortunately not recorded) is in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay (no. NS 519).



the flying gods and the richly carved halo. The sculptor's technique is perfect, the modelling is masterly, the proportions elegant, the poses easy, and the ornaments exquisite. Yet there are already the first signs of decadence. Mannerism has already superseded the observation of nature; the neck, the cheeks, the knees and ankles reveal an insufficient articulation, and the fingers an overstrained sensitiveness. And there is already a tendency to broaden the jaws excessively, a characteristic later very common in the decadent phase of Mediaeval sculpture. Thus we may regard these two statues as monuments of the most mature phase of Gujarātī Jain art under Kumārapāla, which had evolved from earlier, less sophisticated, but not less sensitive creations, such as the Vāgdevī (Sarasvatī) in the British Museum, which bears an inscription of the Paramāra emperor, Bhoja of Dhār, 1034,<sup>1</sup> and two statues from Deogarh, to be dated the middle of the 11th century and 1070.<sup>2</sup>

The other Jain sculptures from Pallū permit us to follow the progressive decadence of the Gujarātī style during the following centuries. There are two door jambs of a small Jain shrine, in red sandstone, at Gosaino. Their diminutive, but neatly executed figures may be attributed to the early 13th century. Still later are the Tirthankara idols in white marble which are now venerated as Brahmanī in the temple of Pallū, and the two black frames which have since been brought to the Bikanēr Museum. They represent standing and flying deities with high mukutas, waving chāmaras (chauris) and playing the vinā or the drum; two elephants flank the image of the Jina sitting in meditation. The image is missing. The figures are vivid, but their treatment is otherwise conventional and occasionally the noses are distorted to that beak-like shape so well known from 15th century Gujarātī miniatures. In other marble sculptures at Pallū the decadence is evinced by other symptoms. There is a very charming group of a dancing goddess standing between two columns and surrounded by chauri-bearing minor goddesses. But the pot-and-foilage capital has degenerated into a cube filled with diamond lozenges, the arch has been replaced by a wild scrollwork, the heads are too heavy, and the arms and legs thin and short. They resemble the repair work executed towards the middle of the 14th century in Vimala Sāh's temples at Delwāra and Kumbhāria<sup>3</sup> and may belong to the same, if not to a slightly later period, and are thus the last monuments of the high Mediaeval sculpture style in Bikanēr State.

## 2. *Rājput Folk Art and the post-Muslim Renaissance.*

In Bikanēr territory Cāhamāna sculpture influenced not only the official monuments of the military posts and trade stations, but also the popular Govardhans and Devalis.

We have already observed that the Rājput chhatris are not of Hindu origin, but go back to the sheds which the aboriginal tribes of Rājputāna and Central India, the Bhils, Minas, Meos, Mers and Gonds, erect over their funeral monuments, and which consist of wooden posts<sup>4</sup> decorated, at the top, with a primitive statuette or relief of the deceased, or with a painted background against which the statuette is standing. From these posts and from the columns (stambhas) which from an early period were set up in front of Hindu temples, developed the Govardhan. Govardhans, however, were erected on the spot where the earthen pots containing the ashes of the deceased had been buried. They are short stone columns, octagonal at the base, rectangular in the middle and with a miniature chapel at the top. In the more elaborate type this chapel is indicated by a śikhara resting on four columns between which the figures of Vishnu, Sūrya, Śiva and Ganeśa appear. In less elaborate examples these figures are rendered in relief, and the śikhara reduced to a knob (āmalaka). The Śiva image is sometimes replaced by the figure of the deceased (and his wife) sacrificing before a linga, such as is the custom on the Virakkals, the Deccanī counterpart of the Govardhans and Pāliyās. Apparently these elaborate Govardhans were first imported from Ajmer or executed by wandering masons from the centres of Cāhamāna civiliza-

<sup>1</sup> 44, p. 46, pl. X.

<sup>2</sup> 202, figs. 4 and 39.

<sup>3</sup> It is most doubtful how much of the present temples really belongs to the original architecture. Repairs and replacement are going on up to the present day, and most of the chapels bear dates of the 14th century. The average style of the temples is later than that of Solanki Hindu art, and can be approximated first to one line of development of later Vāghelā art.

<sup>4</sup> 126.



tion. They<sup>1</sup> have been found at Kolāyat, Pallū (fig. 15), Udarāmsar, Kilchū, Morkhāna, and many other places. Since the early 12th century, however, they were, as funeral monuments, everywhere superseded by the Pāliyās or Devalis, and only in the backward desert, especially at Jaisālmer, did they continue to be used until a much later time as Jhujhār (hero) shrines.<sup>2</sup> But they did not disappear. Their function was reduced to that of memorials (Kīrtistambhas) of pious acts, such as the erection of temples, or the construction of tanks and wells. Such kīrtistambhas<sup>3</sup> can be seen at Kisamīdesar, Morkhāna, Nala, Nala-rā-Kua, and elsewhere. Occasionally both functions were combined, as in the beautiful kīrtistambha<sup>4</sup> at Kodamdesar (fig. 16) which commemorates the excavation of the tank there in 1460 by rāo Jodha of Mārwar, the founder of Jodhpur. Both the tank and the kīrtistambha, however, were intended as a memorial to his mother, Kodama De (Devī), the unhappy wife of rāo Ranamalla of Mandor.

The replacement of the Govardhans by the Pāliyās or Devalis must somehow be connected with the stirring of the Rājput folk spirit in the 12th century, which, on the eve of the Muslim invasion, undermined mediaeval society in Northern India. For the Pāliyā (pati-yā = memorial slab) is a specifically Rājput contribution to Indian art. This memorial slab, decorated with a figure of the deceased standing *en face* in prayer, on horseback, or sword in hand, or with figures of husband and wife (wives) in these attitudes, is, like the Govardhan, a stranger to Hindu art. But its roots are not in the tradition of the aboriginal tribes. They are outside India, in the art of the Central Asian nomads, from the Orkhon River in Mongolia and Irān to the Caucasus and Southern Russia.

The warrior memorial stones first appear, in a primitive form, in the period of the Scythian invasions into Western India (the early Scythian stela<sup>5</sup> from Salad, 100 B.C., in the Baroda State Museum, and the pāliyā stone erected by the Mahākshatrpa Swāmi Rudrasena I at Mūlwāsar, 200<sup>6</sup>). The fully developed type is first found under the Rāshtrakūtas<sup>7</sup> of the Deccan, as virakkāls, with reliefs similar to, but richer than, those of the Northern govardhans and kīrtistambhas. In the North the latter were not displaced until the 12th century, though pāliyās occasionally are found as early as the late 10th century<sup>8</sup>. With the pāliyā proper came into use the horseman figure. It is as old as the earliest nomadic invasions into India. It is first found on the Śaka coins<sup>9</sup> then, combined with a Greek head, on those of "Sōter Megas." Superseded under the Kushānas by the standing royal figure and those of Helios, Nanaia, Ardoksho, etc., it reappears on those of the Śāhis and even on those of the Ghorids of Afghānistān.<sup>10</sup> In India proper it was introduced on the coins of Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta II, possibly in connection with an army reform necessitated by the Hūna-Gurjara cavalry attacks,<sup>11</sup> and was later used on those of Samantadeva. It was however largely replaced by the debased Indo-Sāsānian coin type of the Hūnas, Pratihāra kings, and of the "Gadhāi" variety. Then in the 12th to 13th century the horseman came again into fashion both on the coins<sup>12</sup> and the pāliyās.

In Bikanēr the pāliyās are called devalis (devālaya), a name usually in Rājputānā applied to the royal funeral temples. It seems probable that the name was originally used for the Govardhans which actually were shaped like a chapel, and only transferred to the pāliyās when the latter assumed the function of funeral monuments.

In contrast to Cāhamāna official art the earliest devalis (fig. 13) show a very crude peasant style which has parallels in other parts of India, e.g. Central India, Bihār,<sup>13</sup> or—with more pronounced

<sup>1</sup> 11 for 1917-18, p. 21 ff., p. 44, nos. 51, 53; 220 for 1916, p. 210. Examples exist in The Bikanēr Museum.

<sup>2</sup> 3, pl. opp. p. 442; 164, p. 101. In Gujarāt and Central India there exists no strict division of types, the slab and post type both being used as pāliyās side by side.

<sup>3</sup> 220 for 1916, p. 210, p. 222, p. 227; for 1918, p. 254.

<sup>4</sup> 220 for 1916, p. 217; 11 for 1917-18, p. 44 ff., nos. 54-44.

<sup>5</sup> 92.

<sup>6</sup> 75, pp. 1-4.

<sup>7</sup> Western Chālukya: 36; Rāshtrakūta: 70, VI, p. 162 f.; cp. also 69, for 1917, p. 114. I am obliged for this information to Dr. B. Ch. Chhabra, Ootacamund, and Dr. Moreshwar Dikshit, Poona.

<sup>8</sup> 11 for 1917-18, p. 21 ff., p. 44 ff.—Earliest devalis, 220 for 1917, p. 10 f.

<sup>9</sup> 239; 172, pl. II, fig. 3; 30, I, pp. 18 ff.

<sup>10</sup> 239; 234.

<sup>11</sup> 6; as this type is obviously not of Indian origin, it must have been taken over from the Irānian nomads. Though we know nothing of the circumstances of the adaptation, it must be connected with some Gupta success, probably the defeat of the Pushyamitras by the Guptas. As such reverses and recoveries are in most cases the results of inferior military technique and subsequent army reforms, it seems not improbable that the Gupta recovery was the result of an increased use of cavalry.

<sup>12</sup> 7; 30, I, p. 65 f.

<sup>13</sup> 12.



Rājput characteristics—in the fountain stones of Churāh,<sup>1</sup> Western Chambā State, in the Himālaya. But it is obvious that contact with Cāhamāna sculpture caused this uncouth folk art to develop into a still clumsy and awkward, but nevertheless charming and expressive national style. A characteristic example is the Devalī of a “Rājaputra” and his wives at Morkhāna, 1174. We might compare this style with archaic Greek kouroi or the late Romanesque sculptures of Mediaeval Europe. It even penetrated official temple art, as is proved by the figure of Sonī Devā (fig. 12) in the Morkhāna Temple; and—what is more important—it survived the shock of the Muslim invasion.

Though now local or Jaisālmer stone was used in place of the slabs imported from the East, the tradition was never interrupted apart from one gap, in the South of the country, in the late 14th and early 15th centuries; which was probably due to the depopulation of the country following the Jaisālmer-Jodhpur feud over Kodāma Dē, which led to the invitation to Bīkāji to settle in the country. After the foundation of Bīkānēr State, however, development was twofold. The stelae of the lower gentry continued the rural tradition with practically no change, except in the costumes which mirror the successive court fashions. Those of the aristocracy, on the other hand, reflect the development of contemporary Rājput sculpture. The better devalīs (figs. 14, 17, 19) of the late 15th century again attained the level of the late 12th century. They are crowned by a pointed arch, a final echo of the elaborate arches which spring from the mouths of two makaras above the cult images of the pre-Muslim period. The horse and rider groups are often of very poor quality, though some have a verve distantly reminding one of T'ang terracottas. The woman are always shown en face, the lower part of the body wrapped in a horizontally striped skirt,<sup>2</sup> the upper either nude or in a tight jacket; on the top of the head and above the ears, are large silver bosses,<sup>3</sup> from which hang long ear ornaments, and on the forehead is occasionally worn a rather clumsy diadem. In the course of the 16th century new forms appear, probably from Jodhpur. The motifs of the revivalist architecture of the time were introduced—battlement friezes, pot-and-foilage capitals, column bases, indented borders, the multi-bracket arches of Solankī-Gujarātī and later Jain temples, kalaśas, royal umbrellas, bells and so on. The last stage is reached in the devalī of Rāo Kalyān Mall, 1571, at Devikund (fig. 18). It depicts the ruler on horseback, by the side of his five rānīs who stand in an open hall, looking down on the performance of five girl musicians and five dancing girls. In these animated figures the poses of the heavenly nymphs and musicians so common in the ceilings of Gujarātī and early Rājput temples are transferred to the funeral stela.

Of course, this revival was not restricted to the devalīs, but also found expression in the temple images. It is, however, difficult to trace these beginnings because old idols have in the course of time frequently been replaced by later replicas, either because they had been desecrated or damaged on some occasion, or because the original mūrti seemed to later generations too small and inconspicuous. For the idols saved from Muslim desecration and carried into the desert were in most cases small pieces easy to transport, but not suitable for display. The craftsman, of course, tried to make as faithful a copy as the standards of his time permitted, but did not shrink from slightly embellishing and modernizing his model. Moreover famous images were lavishly redecorated with silver frames, backgrounds, costumes and so on, which are removed so seldom that it is almost impossible to see the original figure. This is the case, for example with the famous sixteen-armed image of Nāgnechīji (Durgā Rāshtrasenā<sup>4</sup>) in the temple not far from Bīkānēr City. The Durgā idol of the rājās of Pūgal (fig. 21) which is said to have been brought from Jaisalmer eight hundred years ago, is according to the socle inscription a replica made in *Samvat* 1736 (1680). By its side there stands the original image, in its workmanship not very different from the Durgā image (fig. 20) in the Bīkānēr Museum dated *Samvat*<sup>5</sup>, 1465 or 1665 (1418 or 1618).<sup>6</sup> However, this barbarian type can be traced in North-west India at least as early as the

<sup>1</sup> 231.

<sup>2</sup> This striped material was common all over Rājputānā, and is worn even today.

<sup>3</sup> Precursors of the forehead ornaments at present used by Mārwarī women and Rājputnīs? They appear also on certain later terra-cottas from Benares. <sup>4</sup> 31, p. 13 <sup>5</sup> The inscription is not quite clear. Most scholars read 1665.



beginning of the 14th century, though we do not know what it was like at an even earlier date in Jaisālmēr, then one of the most backward regions of India.

Both sculptures reveal a pronounced lack of plastic sense. They are drawings in which the flow of an intense line, vehement movement and a strong decorative pattern usurp the place of a detailed observation of life; they are drawings projected on to two or three receding planes, but without a genuine third dimension. This is not merely the result of barbarian clumsiness faced with an unaccustomed medium of expression, for the Ghāntālī image was executed at a time when early Rājput art was already in full bloom. This clumsiness must result rather from the clash of the Rājput folk spirit with the mediaeval tradition which the "Renaissance" of the 14th to the 16th centuries tried to revive. For this essentially linear quality, this accent on a flowing, musical outline, simplified surfaces, and an expressive decorative pattern are characteristic of all later Rājput art. Earlier they had influenced Mediaeval sculpture within the sphere of the "Western School"; they can be traced, earlier still, in the Kushāna royal statues, in at least one aspect of Gandhāra sculpture<sup>1</sup> and, finally, in Sāsānian art.

For this very reason the renaissance of Mediaeval sculpture withered away the very moment that Rājput art came into its own. Ritual, however, is everywhere conservative, and the "Renaissance" type continued to linger on in the temple cult, though in the course of time idols also were more and more assimilated into the main current of Rājput art. Thus, the Ganeśa image in the tympanum of the Hazūri Gate of the Fort Palace (early 17th century) is a projection of a contemporary miniature on three successive planes. In still later images, for example discarded Karnījī idols (in the court of the Deshnokē Temple), the saintly incarnation of the Devī is dressed in the Mughal court costume of the early 18th century. And in later figures both at Deshnokē and in the Bikanēr Museum she appears as a Rājput princess of the late 18th or early 19th century, distinguished only by the triśul in her one hand above the head of the bull-demon, and a bird or severed human head in the other. The same applies to the other Hindu gods and goddesses. In the course of the 18th and early 19th centuries their images became idealized counterparts of contemporary Rājput society.

This transformation was not due to the scarcity of Cāhamāna and Solankī sculptures in Bikanēr, and thus to an insufficient contact with classical Hindu tradition. For the Bikanēris had opportunities to remain in contact with the latter. In 1582 the combined efforts of Rāi Singhjī and of his minister, Karam Chand, succeeded in obtaining from Akbar<sup>2</sup> no less than 1050 Jain idols, which had been looted in 1576, during the capture of Achalgarh and the defeat of Sūrthān Singh of Sirohi, by Tursam Khān, Rāi Singhjī's fellow-commander, and had been sent to Fathpur Sikri for melting. They were deposited in an underground vault of the Chintāmani temple and are taken out only when a famine or epidemic demands an especially solemn propitiation of the Gods. Among these idols are a number of masterpieces in bronze, copper and brass, some as old as the 7th century, others belonging to the glorious period of the 11th to 12th centuries, and others fine examples of the decorative style of the 13th to 15th centuries. Rāi Singh brought home other Gujarātī, Jain as well as Hindu, brass idols from his vast fiefs in Gujarāt and from his sūbadārship at Burhānpur. When Aurangzēb started his persecution of Hindu "idolatry," both Karan and Anūp Singhjī gave shelter to mūrtis in danger of desecration.<sup>3</sup> Later when Anūp Singhjī had achieved a compromise with the emperor and was stationed in the Deccan, he continued to collect Hindu images in the Marātha and South Indian theatres of war. To these efforts is due, another great collection now preserved in a chapel of the Kārkhāna Gangā-Jal. From an artistic point of view, however, these South Indian bronzes are of small interest, and both collections have had not the least influence on the development of local sculpture.

### 3. *Rājput Sculpture*

This independence of later Rājput sculpture from the otherwise sacrosanct Mediaeval cult tradition may partly be explained by the overwhelming role played by the Krishna Govinda cult, the

<sup>1</sup> 14; 15.

<sup>2</sup> 153.

<sup>3</sup> 164, p. 36; 192; 169; local tradition.





MAHARAJ KESRI SINGH FIGHTING WITH A LIONESS

(Died 1670.), brother of Mahārāja Anūp Singhji (1675/8-98). Miniature of the Sujan Singh School, ca. 1715-20. Lallgarh Palace, Bikanēr.







influence of which had been modest indeed between the 1st and 8th centuries and again since the 12th century. From the 15th century however it became the one truly popular religion of Rājputānā, overflowing into innumerable mystic songs and lyric poems describing the love of Rādhā and Krishna, a subject first made popular by Jayadeva's *Gītāgovinda* towards the end of the 12th century.<sup>1</sup> Thus, apart from a few scenes, a complete iconography had to be developed, and as the poets and singers felt so familiar with the life of Śrī Krishna, and as Krishna became the ideal prototype of all Rājputs, and Rādhikā the ideal of all Rājputnīs, this iconography became more and more the mirror of an idealised Rājput society. Other gods were affected by this modernization insofar as they were drawn into the myth of Śrī Krishna, and at last almost the whole Hindu pantheon was recast in the spirit of contemporary Rājput court life.

Jain iconography, ossified and conservative, and at the same time backed by a much stronger artisan tradition, withstood much longer. But after the middle of the 18th century it, too, began to give way. First the figures of donors, devotees and teachers were modernized, then those of the minor deities—now often modelled on Mughal peris<sup>2</sup>—, next the earthly existences of the Tirthankars were treated in the spirit of contemporary life, and finally even their rigidly fixed images were affected, at least to some degree. By the beginning of the 19th century Jain art had also become purely Rājput.

Genuine Rājput sculpture first appeared in purely decorative motifs where no ritualistic tradition stood in the way. They include elephant statues, with or without riders, which flank the entrances of temples and forts, horse statues, the animal, bird and fantastic figures used as corbels on top of columns, brackets, or parts of brackets, and the elephant and horse reliefs on chhatris or in decorative niches. Most of these motifs were developed from the Solankī-Vāghelā tradition of Gujarāt. The elephants which in the Mediaeval temples formed part of the Gajapitha, were later reduced to socle groups of two, and finally became independent figures. Rampant monsters with lion bodies and lion, elephant or makara heads are found between the brackets of the gates of Dabhoi and Jhinjwāda (11th to 12th centuries)<sup>3</sup>, and hamsas and peacocks first appear in late Vāghelā folk art.<sup>4</sup> In Rājput art, however, the treatment of these motifs changed. The essentials of form and vehement movement were caught in a few summarily treated masses on which minor details were simply engraved, as in the Kushān royal statues<sup>5</sup> and Sāsānian and later Persian sculpture of the Seljuq-Mongol period. These types were taken over, with Rājput architecture, by the Mughals in the reigns of Akbar and Jahāngīr. Rājput elephant and rider statues embellish the gates of almost all the famous Mughal forts<sup>6</sup> and palaces. At Bīkānēr also they flank the entrance to the Sūraj Parol, and elephant half-figures form the brackets of its balconies (fig. 27) and the corbels of the columns of the Devīdwāra and the Chaubārā (fig. 36). Peacocks, some of them very similar to the "Peacock Dragons" of Sāsānian art, which were perhaps originally Indian makaras, form part of the wood carvings of the door (cp. also fig. 24) of the Har Mandir court.

With the introduction of the classic Mughal art of Shāhjahān and Aurangzēb, all these sculptural motifs again went out of fashion. Instead, another type of decoration acquired considerable importance—Raslilā relief of the type to be found on the central ceilings of the royal chhatris at Devīkund. Their origin is not known; but it seems probable that such a Raslilā ceiling was first used in the Keśava Temple of Mathurā, erected by rājā Bīr Singh Deo of Orchhā. Though this temple was destroyed by Aurangzēb, a similar ceiling is preserved over the staircase of Bīr Singh's great palace at Dātīā.<sup>7</sup> Not long afterwards the chhatris of a rānī of Sūr Singhjī and of another princess at Devīkund were provided with rather timid Raslilā reliefs. In Anūp Singh's chhatrī (fig. 54) this motif is fully developed. Each

<sup>1</sup> It is worth observing that also in Western India Krishna bhakti lyrics start with the introduction of the *Gītāgovinda*. Cp. 124; 139; 141.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Pārivanātha Temple at Merā Road; see also 99c, fig. 4. <sup>3</sup> 41, pls. 66 ff.; 198; 71, l, p. 311 f. <sup>4</sup> E.g. at Vadnagar, Tārangā, Dabhoi, etc. <sup>5</sup> 233, pls. 1-4; etc.

<sup>6</sup> Āgra: Delhi Gate (Hāthī Pol), Delhi: Delhi Gate; Lahore: Hāthī Pol; Fathpur Sikrī; Māndu; Hāthī-mālā near Bhīmbar, Kashmir.

<sup>7</sup> 86; 98.



of the participants in the dance fills the centre of one of the almost triangular slabs which form the central dome. The joints of the slabs are hidden by cypresses. Below, flowers lead to the frieze of trifoliated battlements which crowns the panels of the drum; above, a double circle of leafwork closely surrounds the rosette of the pendant Keystone. Four gopīs with sitār, drum, tambourin and cymbals dance with four manifestations of Krishna, who is playing the flute or moving in various dance poses. Though the style of the figures follows the conventions of contemporary Mughal art, it is obvious that they are inspired by real dance performances, in the tradition of Bhārata Nāṭya. The proportions of the figures and of their setting are excellent, the movements animated, and the poses expressive, though restrained by the solemn etiquette of the 17th century. There are still vestiges of former painting in the large, simplified planes so characteristic of Rājput painting, but in a colour scheme already revealing considerable Mughal influence.

For the next hundred years the Raslilā reliefs continued to be the characteristic decoration of the chhatris of all the rulers of Bikaner. Those of Sujān Singhji, of his mother Rājavatī Kanwar Devī and of his queen, Ādijī Kanwar Devī, more or less repeat the ceiling of Anūp Singh's samādh with, however, certain modifications which can also be seen in the Raslilā reliefs in the chhatris of Śrī Paraśurām Giri at Kolāyat (1692) and of Purohit Jagrāmji (1740) (fig. 55) between the South East wall and curtain of Bikaner Fort. The number of figures was increased to twelve by confronting each of the four manifestations of Śrī Krishna with two gopīs, which entailed a reduction of the size of the individual figures and the extension into the framework of the late Mughal flower arabesques, which had already covered most of Anūp Singhji's chhatrī. Simultaneously, however, the quality of the figures degenerated, heads became too heavy, legs too short, movements stiff and expressions awkward.

In the chhatris of Gaj Singhji and of his son Śyām Singh the size of the figures was further reduced so that each figure, now set into a cartouche, and enclosed top and bottom by trefoil arches connected by merely indicated columns, had again sufficient space. At the same time movements were reduced to a uniform rhythm. Krishna plays the flute, and the gopīs the sitār, in almost the same pose. The girls, however, in the stiff, wide-spreading court costumes turn smoothly in the quiet circling rhythm of contemporary court nautch, Krishna in the restless counter-rhythm of the old Bhārat Nāṭya.

This adaptation to the court style was apparently facilitated by the parallel development of a secular type of Rājput sculpture, occasioned by a reversal of the process which had introduced Mughal and Mughal-Rājput typology into contemporary religious art. It seems to have come into fashion at Jaipur in the reigns of Sawai Mādhō Singh (Mādhō-Vilās<sup>1</sup>) and Sawai Pratāp Singh (Hawā Mahal). At Bikaner this later Rājput sculpture appears first in the rather odd plaster busts of "Portuguese" ladies (fig. 39) in the Phul Mahal, with their strange mixture of European and Mughal costume. Though such figures are most common in Mughal paintings of the later part of Aurangzēb's reign and the time of Bahādūr Shāh I and Farrukhsiyar, it is difficult to say whether these reliefs go back as far as the reign of Sujān Singhji, or should not be attributed to the early years of Gaj Singhji. For it is in the buildings of the latter that we find the first, rather modest experiments in this direction—the small stucco reliefs of long-winged "Mughal" peris in the leafwork on top of the engaged pilaster capitals in the vestibule of the Chandar Mahal, and the small dragon figures holding the mirrors set in the wall between these pilasters.

In the similar leafwork in the Anūp Mahal (fig. 50) these small reliefs were further elaborated. The peris recur, but in harmony with the growing religiosity of the time, they are overshadowed by mythological groups—Peris (Devatās), peris with deer, peris adoring a linga, Vishnu and Lakshmi sitting on a lotus, Krishna as the flute player, Śrī-Nātha, the Lord of Vaikuntha, on a lotus and surrounded by chauri-bearing girls or adored by gopīs. All these small groups are still mere translations of contemporary Rājput paintings into the third dimension, though with that simplification of planes and

<sup>1</sup> See p. 79 note 2.



masses so characteristic of Rājput sculpture.

In the last years of Sūrāt Singhjī a real style developed from these experiments and may be seen in the mythological scenes in the ante-room (Sāl) of the Phūl Mahal (fig. 44) and the figures in the Shish Mahal of the Gaj Mandir. The latter represent four maidservants with a *morchāl* (peacock-feather fan) or other objects in their hands, each standing in a niche. The former are arranged in niche-shaped panels between the windows, doors and the cornice, and show above the West door Rādhā, Krishna-Murlīdhār and a *gopī* (fig. 43), above the East door Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmana, along the North wall (from right to left) Sūrya, Gaurī, Mahā-Śrī (Lakshmi) with two maid-attendants, Umā-Maheśvara and Ganeśa, and along the South wall (from right to left) Sarasvatī, Nar Singh, the Bhadrināth Temple in the Himālaya (under the *bangaldār* roof of Gaj Singh's former *jharokhā*), Varāha and Hanumān. This selection reflects the predilections of Rājput piety. The place of honour is given to Rāma and Sītā, the mythical ancestors and models of the (Sūryavamsī) Rājput rulers, and to Rādhā and Krishna, the darlings of all Rājput women. The North side is mainly devoted to the Śaivite cult, including however the Śakti of Vishnu—the great Śakti assuming also Śaivite forms—who in Rājputana not infrequently overshadows Vishnu (Lakshminātha) proper; the South side, on the other hand, has been mainly reserved for Vaishnavism. Sūrya and Hanumān have been placed so as to flank, as ancestor and devoted servants, Sītā and Rāma.

All these gods and goddesses are treated as Rājput princes and princesses and dressed in the Rājput court costume. True, a concession has been made to the cult insofar as the costumes of the 16th and 17th centuries were retained, though with considerable additions from the fashions of the day, especially in the attendant figures. The reason for this archaism must be sought in the fact that these stucco sculptures represent copies of the dolls carried about on the heads of women in the processions of the Gaurī, Tij and other festivals. The execution of the groups must have dragged on over a considerable time, because the gallery was used as the royal sleeping apartment where work could be continued only during the rare occasions when the mahārājā was absent for at least several months. Thus, they reflect the whole curve of artistic decline from the reign of Sūrāt Singhjī to that of Dūngar Singhjī. Some, like the maid-servants of the Shish Mahal or the Rādhā-Krishna group reveal the elegant and delicate mannerism of Sūrāt Singhjī's time, with somewhat elongated bodies, relaxed though stylish poses, dreamy and somewhat weary, heavily painted faces and elegant costumes; others, like the Mahā-Śrī, Gaurī or Sarasvatī, are already a cruder echo of the Sūrāt Singh style. In the Sītā, Rāma and Lakshmana group, child-bodies, with large, clumsy feet and hands, support heavy heads with goggle eyes, which remind one of the last Raslīlā ceiling painting in Dūngar Singh's Chhattar Mahal.

During all these centuries the *devalis* (pāliyās), which up to Kalyān Mall's time had formed the principal monuments of Bikānērī Rājput art, continued to be executed for the deceased rulers and nobles, and to be set up under the *chattris*. Those of the nobles are, like the decorative figural reliefs in the Chandar and Anūp Mahal, mere translations of contemporary miniatures, generally conventional portraits. Those of the rulers were perhaps of a higher quality. Unfortunately they no longer exist. The present royal *devalis* are replicas, apparently set up during the repair of the Devikund *chhattis* by mahārājā Ratan Singhjī in 1836. Though tradition does not specify the character of the repairs, the style both of the figures and of the ornaments is that of Ratan Singhjī's time. During the wanton devastation of the war with Jodhpur in 1808, when the Anūp Sāgar and the Gajner Palace were destroyed, many of the memorial slabs must have been smashed by the Pindāris in the besieging army. Sūrāt Singhjī had afterwards to think first of strengthening the Fort and repairing the palace, and so it was left to his successor Ratan Singhjī to renovate the royal tombs. But in the meantime white marble had become popular and practically all the old *devalis* were replaced by marble replicas. They consist of a sloping socle often decorated with leafwork, into which the memorial slab proper is set. This is divided into several panels. That at the bottom contains the commemorative inscription, framed by ornament somewhat reminding of the 18th century European tomb stones; then follows a frieze of royal concubines who had become *satis*; and finally, the ruler on horseback, a girl holding the



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royal umbrella over his head, and the *rānīs* who had been burnt with him. Sun and moon look down on the scene, which is crowned by an arch, in most cases formed by foliage scrolls, and ending in a sort of spire. It is obvious that these slabs are not exact copies of the original stelae, for the ornament round the inscriptions and on top of the slabs is of Ratan Singh's time, as are many of the sati figures. Sometimes however, the whole group of the ruler with his queens or the portrait of the ruler on horseback are copied from the original stela. Whether in the latter case part of the original stela had been lost, or whether the scene was elaborated in order to satisfy the later conception of the historical importance of the deceased, is difficult to say. Some of the original stelae, for example that of Anūp Singhi, must have been of considerable size and artistic quality, and it is a pity that they are lost. Others deviate from the conventional scheme, e.g. those of certain *rānīs* or that of mahārājā Gaj Singhji, which shows the ruler fanning the idol of Lakshmīnātha. That of the last sati, Dīp Kunwar, widow of Sūrat Singh's second son, Moti Singh, forms the focus of a fair held in August every year.

The memorial slabs of the mahārājās, princes and mahārānīs represent the only type of Rājput sculpture still practised, though endless repetition of the old work is all that is achieved. The few experiments which have been made in reviving local sculpture, e.g. in the reliefs on both sides of the entrance to the Karniji Temple at Deshnok, and in the house façades of rich merchants and bankers, are complete failures. Taste presupposes a balanced style of life, which cannot be found in a period of transition, when old ideals are crumbling and new imported reforms still await assimilation.



## VII. PAINTING IN BĪKĀNĒR

### 1. *Early Rājput and Mughal Painting.*

We know nothing at present of painting in Bīkānēr State previous to the Muslim invasions. Since the cult images and possibly the entrance frames of the later Pallū temples seem to have been of stone and the rest of the buildings of local sun-dried bricks, it is probable that the latter were hidden under a layer of plaster decorated with wall paintings. However, since the exact site of these temples has not been traced and excavated, the correctness of this conclusion cannot yet be checked.

The actual beginnings of pictorial art at Bīkānēr probably formed part of the Jain cultural renaissance in the 15th and early 16th centuries. There are several very beautiful illustrated palmleaf manuscripts of the Kalpasūtra in the possession of the Jain community at Bīkānēr, though whether they were imported from Gujarāt or painted in Rājputānā by immigrant artists, it is not possible to say. They are in the style characteristic of most of those manuscripts; one,<sup>1</sup> however, represents an elegant, almost "fashionable" variety of great decorative beauty, though it is also on the very verge of that decline which set in with the introduction of paper.

The local style of painting is found in a number of crude drawings on very poor paper, the oldest of which may belong to the reign of Rāo Kalyān Mall (1539-1571).<sup>2</sup> They are clearly related to the reliefs on the rustic pāliyās and devalis, which, in fact, are themselves nothing but drawings in relief. These primitive pictures must still have been produced by local artists in smaller places up to the end of the 17th century. And it is interesting to observe that a group of them reveals distinct affinities with the so-called "Basohli" miniatures of the Panjāb Himālaya.

However, a local school of painting probably developed at Bīkānēr first in the reign of Rāi Singhjī. Its beginnings can be studied in a manuscript of Kālidāsa's Meghadūta, which includes also an anonymous Rājasthānī commentary and some stray Sanskrit and Rājasthānī verses of Seu, Samana and Jawāla (Anūp Singh Sanskrit Library, No. 81/15). It contains sixteen illustrations to the Bhāgavata Purāna, with figures, in the contemporary Rājput costume. Incapable of inventing appropriate illustrations, the artist had to fall back on the more popular subjects of the Krishna Līlā. He cannot have been a prominent master, for his technique hardly exceeds that of the above mentioned popular pictures. The paper is not primed, the drawing very summary and the poses awkward. Yet these miniatures reveal a great progress. They are planned compositions with a balanced and animated decorative pattern, and it is clear that the painter must already have felt at least some artistic influence from outside. There is still an echo of the Jain tradition in the treatment of the figures (chāmara-bearer) and the heads with the exaggerated eyes and pointed noses. There are Rājput peculiarities, such as the costumes, peacocks, parrots, lions and the dancing and flute-playing Krishna. But the forms of trees and flowers are for the most part those used by the Muslim artists of Ahmadābād and Chāmpāner,<sup>3</sup> and the lines of costumes, belts, dopattas and arms are arranged in a radiating pattern which is not uncommon in the last phase of Vijayanagar art. The manuscript is not dated, but must be assigned to the first period of Bīkānēr expansion, when Nāgaur and Mārwar had lately been given to Rāi Singhjī. In both areas Jain and Muslim Gujarātī influence was considerable, and since the fall of Vijayanagar direct and indirect South Indian influences were felt all over the Deccan and Rājputānā.

The close association with Akbar's court and the campaigns in the imperial service gave Rāi Singhjī a more Catholic taste. He became an enthusiastic collector of miniature paintings, some of which must have been presents or loot, but others had probably been commissioned or purchased. In the first category are two which may possibly be connected with the political events which led to the alliance between Bīkānēr and Akbar. One (DN 10) represents the young emperor attacking lions. In the foreground

<sup>1</sup> Agarchand Nahta Collection.

<sup>2</sup> At least their style corresponds to that of Kalyān Mall's devali.

<sup>3</sup> 90. These are worked also into the Gītāgovinda MS. published by M. R. Majmudar (141), see p. 98 note 7.



the old Khānkhānā looks with amazement at the daring exploits of the younger generation Akbar with an arrow pinning a deer to the lion which is devouring it, and a Rājput attacking another lion, armed only with a club and a piece of cloth round the arm. The composition of the picture was inspired by earlier Tīmūrid and Safavid miniatures, and was, in its turn, imitated by later Mughal artists.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, like the court scenes intended as the description of some actual incident, which in this case occurred during Akbar's stay at Ajmer from 1560 to 1562, just before the rupture with Bairām Khān. The other miniature (DR 41) depicts Akbar, on horseback, receiving a princely deputation not far from an Indian fortress situated between steep mountains. That this scene represents the submission of Kalyān Mall and Rāi Singhji to Akbar at Ajmer, seems highly probable, but cannot be proved in the absence of an inscription. For both miniatures must have been executed by some of Akbar's chief painters considerably later, towards the end of the 16th century. There are other pictures of the same period. One (DR 40) shows Akbar travelling on an elephant through the Arāvallis, surrounded by soldiers and servants; another is a rather crude sketch (DN 21) by a Persian (?) artist, apparently inspired by a picture of Akbar's battue in the Akbar-Nāmā in the South Kensington Museum<sup>2</sup>; and a third represents a magic elephant (DN 23), composed of many animals and led by a Dēv carrying a club and snakes. The best miniature, however, is an illustration from a manuscript of Shams-ud-dīn Muhammad Assār's (died 1382-1383) mathnawī Mihr-u-Mushtarī (1327).<sup>3</sup> It shows a Hindu priest placing an idol (Durgā ?) into a shrine, the type of which has been misunderstood by the artist. The ceremony is attended by a number of sādhus and devotees, who stand in the shadow of a tree in the middle of a court, the entrance of which is guarded by two men, who are in Rājput costume and armed with long sticks. The miniature, which must date from Akbar's last years and even reveals some slight European influence, has been torn from its context, and only a few verses are left in the marginal panels. On the reverse a piece of calligraphy is now mounted bearing the signature of Muhammad Husain Tabrizī,<sup>4</sup> the famous calligrapher, who died in India after having fled from the court of Shāh Ismāil II (1576-1578) of Persia. There are some fine Persian miniatures in Rāi Singh's collection, one belonging to the school of the great Bihzād, and another a fine example of the oversophisticated style of Shāh Tahmāsp, with however a certain Turkish (?) element in it.

Notwithstanding these acquisitions Mughal influence remained negligible during Rāi Singh's reign; it must have appeared too strange and elaborate to the simple warriors just emerging from their barren desert. What they could understand, was the art of Central Rājputānā, of Dhūndhār, Mārwar and Mewār which had already attained a high level of perfection, but breathed the same young spirit of simplicity, heroic bravery and mystic exaltation. How this early Rājput pictorial art developed, is not yet clear. Though its roots go back to the hieratic book illustrations of 15th and early 16th century Gujarāt and to the folk art of the pāliyās, its creative inspiration must be sought in the mystical enthusiasm of Mīrā Bāi and her contemporaries.<sup>5</sup>

The transition to the new style can be traced in a number of Jain<sup>6</sup> and Vaishnavite manuscripts from Northern Gujarāt.<sup>7</sup> Their yellow backgrounds reappear in a number of picture sets and illustrated manuscripts coming from Mārwar, Dhūndhār, and possibly also Sirohi and Bikanēr. Further East the more archaic dark red background was preferred. We find it on the "Bundela Primitives," first discovered by Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy,<sup>8</sup> which possibly may have come from Chitorgarh and Udaipur, and finally on contemporary pictures from Bihār, Nepāl and Western Bengal. To this second group must belong a small set of illustrations to the Rasikpriyā of Keśavadās Sanādhya Mīśra (1555-1617), a protégé of rājā Madhukar Shāh of Orchhā. The Rasikpriyā is a work on poetical composition and must have enjoyed great popularity in the 16th and 17th centuries. The ten paintings (Pl. III)

<sup>1</sup> 145, pl. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 123, no. 134, pl. 6a.

<sup>3</sup> Kindly identified by Professor Muhammad Shafi, Lahore. For Assār cp. 68, I, p. 491.

<sup>4</sup> 68, III, p. 689.

<sup>5</sup> 99b, 99d.

<sup>6</sup> 40: transition style MSS.: HV (early 16th century); JM (1563); early Rājput: JP (1591).

<sup>7</sup> 139: 140a; 141.

<sup>8</sup> 49, pls. 1-3; 76, pls. 1C, 6, 9, 10, 110, 14A, B, 16A, B, 22A, 25B, 26C, 37A, B, 38A, 40B, 41A, 46A, 52A, 56A, 58C, 60B, 65A, 71A, 78C, 80C, 82A, 85, 86A, 91D.



of the set look like an archaistic imitation of Coomaraswamy's *Rāgmālā* of the same type, and may belong to the beginning of the 17th century. The technique is identical. We find the same synthetic best-view build-up of the figures as in ancient Egyptian art, the same profile faces, the same over-emphasized hypnotic eyes, the same simple, but very expressive outline, the same composition in stripes and similar glowing colours. The architecture corresponds to that of Mān Singh Tomār's palace at Gwāliōr, Ratan Singh's palace at Chitor, the Purāna Mahal at Amber and the Rāmji Mandir at Orchhā. Strong rhythmic sense, hieratic solemnity and a deeply felt naïve expression endow all these love-scenes with a great beauty.<sup>1</sup>

A very different type is represented by another set of 54 illustrations to the *Rasikpriyā*. Its style obviously forms the last phase of a tradition, which, starting from the above mentioned Gujarātī-Rājput miniatures with yellow background, slowly detached itself from the mediaeval mannerism of the 15th century, reached maturity in the early Rādhā-Krishna miniature published by Coomaraswamy<sup>2</sup>, absorbed Muslim-Gujarātī (transformed "Baghdād School"<sup>3</sup>) and Mālva elements, in a *Krishnalīlā* manuscript lately discovered at Delhi, and finally in the set under discussion was flooded with Mughal innovations.<sup>4</sup> This eclectic character indicates a disturbed country as place of origin, and the headings of the Delhi manuscript<sup>5</sup> are in fact in the dialect of Mārwar, the kingdom of Maldeo, which Rāi Singh had occupied from 1572 to 1581. Thus the earlier stages of this style must have developed under rāo Maldeo, who had also been a great builder. Sirohī under the indomitable Sūrthān Singh may also be assumed a probable centre of the same style. Of course, the general character of these pictures is the same as in the already mentioned small *Rasikpriyā* set. The striped composition is subdivided into panels, generally with a yellow, but sometimes with a dark-red background. The human figure is likewise built up from the angle of the most complete view of each individual member. But the composition much richer, the scenes are overcrowded and an attempt is made to use perspective for gardens and garden pavilions. The Rājput typology is richer; hamsas, parrots, tigers, the architectural forms of the Hindu Renaissance, dancing girls, Śalabhanjikās and many other motifs are introduced. Kāma and Rati sit in the trees like two naughty children, and the demons remind one of the Irānian Divs in the early Mughal *Hamza-Nāma*. The heads are much heavier, rounder and shorter than the rather slim type found in the preceding group or the small but angular heads of the Dhūndhār-Bikānēr group. The jewellery sometimes reminds of Deccanī fashions, but generally comes nearer to Mārwar types of Jahāngīr's time. But many buildings, tents, doors and costumes reveal Mughal features. Even Persian turbans appear occasionally. A Ganeśa is even treated in a completely naturalistic manner. On the other hand the outline has lost its sureness, the movements are clumsy and the colours, though rich and including gold, are crude, gaudy and dirty. Artistically poor, the set is historically of great interest.

A third style<sup>7</sup>, apparently associated with Dhūndhār-Amber, can be traced in a large set of the *Bhāgavata-Purāna* (fig. 91), in another of sixteen pictures to the *Ushā-Charita*, and in a third of twenty-one

<sup>1</sup> The MS. offers some difficult, but very interesting problems. The very fact that it is an illustration to the *Rasikpriyā* (written 1591) does not allow us to treat it as a genuine Rājput primitive. The treatment of the colours shows Mughal influence, and its psychological delicacy is compatible only with an already refined Rājput society, i.e. it cannot be earlier than 1600. On the other hand are outline and composition similar to the "Bundela-Rāgmālās." In other words, it is not an archaic, but an archaistic set. This presupposes an attitude of conservative opposition to the new trends inspired by Mughal contact. And such an atmosphere prevailed only in one state, Mewār. For the same reason we must infer that the underlying tradition is that of Chitorgarh and not Orchhā. Orchhā was a newcomer in Bundelkhand after the overthrow of Chanderī by Bābur and Shēr Shāh. The sudden flare-up of "Bundela" art, thus, cannot be original, but must have been imported. On the other hand, Chitorgarh should be regarded as the original centre of early Rājput art, as the first big power of Rājputānā, the scene of Mīrā Bāī's revolutionary activity, and the first centre of Rājput architecture. That no early paintings have survived from Mewār and that art appeared so suddenly in Bundelkhand, may be explained by pointing to the two disastrous captures of Chitorgarh by Bahādur Shah of Gujarāt 1534 and by Akbar 1568. <sup>2</sup> 51, vol. V, pl. 18; 52, pl. 82, fig. 258.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 97 note 3. Some fragments, in which the Muslim-Gujarātī and Jain-Gujarātī style elements are fused, are in the N.C. Mehta collection.

<sup>4</sup> A possible terminus ante quem of most of these miniature sets is given in an inspection note on their reverse, dated 1594.

<sup>5</sup> At present with art dealer Tularām, Delhi.

<sup>6</sup> Also other miniatures of the same type, e.g. the *Sūrdās* illustrations in the Baroda State Museum, come from Mārwar. Some collectors, however, prefer to ascribe these paintings to Mewār, as their style has later survived at Udaipur. In the light of all the known circumstances this is improbable. As the few Jodhpur paintings of the 17th century, e.g. at Būndī, are under strong Mughal influence, it is more likely that the older Mārwar style migrated to Mewār about 1580-1600, when, with Udai Singh, Mughal influence had become supreme at the Rāthor court.

<sup>7</sup> 99b.



illustrations to the *Rasikpriyā* (Pl. IX). They also reveal considerable affinities with Mughal painting, but of a different character. Mughal influence is found in some architectural motifs and costumes, but not in the style, which is early Rājput at its best. On the contrary, the latter is rather the prototype of the Rājput strain in the Akbar school of Mughal painting; and the Rājput female types and costumes in the *Razm-Nāma* at Jaipur and in many other masterpieces of Akbar's painters go back to the figures found in these three sets. This relation in which the Rājputs inspired the Mughals, existed only between Akbar's court and that of the rājās Bhagwāndās and Mān Singh of Amber. The architectural forms in these three sets are also very similar to the early architecture of Amber and Bikanēr. But the sureness of the technique and the grandeur of the conception, comparable with the best works of European Romanesque art, can be traced only in the contemporary Kachwāha temples<sup>1</sup> at Amber and around Mathurā.

A very early and simple example of this style is the MS. Laud Or. 149, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.<sup>2</sup> But the scenes of the Bhāgavata and Ushā-Charita sets at Bikanēr are already of a more developed type. The figures, somewhat taller than in most Rājput and Mughal miniatures, are set off against a glowing yellow background, and Śrī Krishna is framed by a quadrangle painted dark-red<sup>3</sup> like the interior of houses. The geometrical composition resembles that of the "Basohli" school of the Panjāb Himālaya, which must be an offshoot of the Dhūndhār-Amber style. Basohli took over most of its art from Nūrpur, and the Krishna Temple of rāja Bāsudev at Nūrpur,<sup>4</sup> which was destroyed probably by Jahāngīr in 1618, is even in its sculptures an imitation of the Kachwāha temples around Mathurā; and the miniatures of the early 17th century, when the early Rājasthānī style was superseded at Amber by a semi-Mughal mannerism and the Basohli school began to develop under the rājās Bhūpat-pāl and Sangrāmpāl, are at both places practically identical.<sup>5</sup>

The scenes, no longer built up in successive stripes, are however still flat, as in a classic bas-relief, with little indication of the scenery: a few trees, flowers and houses and, in one instance, a bird's-eye view of the Jumnā river. Attention is concentrated on the actors of the mystic drama, on Śrī Krishna and the milkmaids and cowherds of Gokul, from whom the occasional extravagances of costume detract nothing. This simplification and concentration on the essential, the speaking poses and expressive gestures, the glowing yellow and red backgrounds, combine to create an atmosphere of wonderful purity and fervent mystic passion reminiscent of the masterpieces of a Duccio or Cimabue.

The *Rasikpriyā* set (Pl. IX) of the Amber School is somewhat later and has already lost something of this fervent spirit, though nothing of the vitality and purity of the style. For though the *Rasikpriyā* makes the Rādhā-Krishna symbolism of mystical love a pretext, it is in fact a treatise on erotics and is expressive of the growing secular spirit of the time. It is no accident that Keśava-dās' parallel work, the *Kavi Priyā*, had been dedicated to a famous courtesan, Pravin Rāy Pāturi. The illustrations describe the manifold stages of amorous experience, first meeting, fascination and secret courtship, the messages of the confidantes, expectation and disappointment, separation and the bliss of union. For this purpose the pictures which are almost square in shape, are in most cases divided into four sections by two stripes, half of the picture showing indoor and half outdoor scenes. Sometimes the indoor scenes are treated as if they were acted in the lower and upper storeys of the same palace, and the outdoor scenes are divided by a garden enclosure or trees. In one scene, for instance, the maidservant tries to persuade Rādhikā to accede to Krishna's entreaties, in the other he is lying at her feet. Or lonely Rādhikā is waiting for her lover who stealthily approaches through a garden. These scenes are not mere fiction. Rāi Singh's brother, Rām Singh, was assassinated in such an affair with a married noble lady; Jujhār Singh of Orchhā poisoned his rānī on suspicion of a similar intrigue with his brother; and many more such stories could be cited from the *chroniques*

<sup>1</sup> See p. 60 note 6; the reliefs of these temples also offer the basis for an approximate chronology: Sati Burj, Mathura, 1570; thereafter MS. Laud Or. 149; thereafter large set of Bhāgavata Purāna, Bikanēr; Govind Deo Temple, Brindāban, 1590; thereafter *Rasikpriyā*, Bikanēr; thereafter Mughal-Amber Bhāgavata series (see p. 103); Krishna Temple, Nūrpur, before 1618.

<sup>2</sup> 76, pls. 64D, 73A, 78B, 80D.

<sup>3</sup> Such a tendency already in the early Gitagovinda MS., see p. 98 note 7.

<sup>4</sup> 197.

<sup>5</sup> 78.



*scandaleuses* of the 16th and 17th centuries. The architecture resembles that of the Purāna Mahal at Amber and the Sūraj Parol and Zenāna at Bikānēr, combining Gujarātī-Hindu and Muslim features with elements borrowed from Mughal art. The figures are rather slim, with angular heads, their postures often almost identical with those in ancient Egyptian art—a parallel, not an influence—the outline is spirited, the colours are contrasted in harmonious, well balanced planes, and the four quarters of the picture generally kept in a complementary colour relation.

## 2. *Early Indo-Muslim Paintings.*

How far the style of these sets influenced the progress of local painting at Bikānēr, is difficult to say. Though it seems probable that the style of the early Bikānēr school was very close to the Amber manner<sup>1</sup>, it must not be forgotten that the rājās were most of their time abroad, and that their entourage assumed a rather cosmopolitan character. The Rājput style of painting, therefore, was dictated not by the nationality of the painters, but by the taste of their employers. At Bikānēr the overwhelming majority of "Rājput" painters have been Muslims, and are so even to-day. Even the portrait of Rāo Bhoj Rāthor (Pl. X) the oldest picture which can be proved to have been painted at Bikānēr, is the work of a Muslim, Nūr Muhammad, son of the painter Shāh Muhammad. This miniature, painted in A.H. 1015 (1606), shows an elderly man, in a small turban (*pagri*) and heavy orange Rājput costume, standing in a grey niche crowned by a broad pointed arch. This arch is capped by a frieze of battlements (*kāngūras*) and of arabesques, such as are commonly found in illuminated Persian manuscripts. The whole composition is unique. The arch is of a type intermediate between that in the Lodī buildings and that found in early Rājput palaces; the *kāngūra* ornament is also identical with that found in the Lodī tombs and in early Mughal architecture, e.g. the Khair-ul Manāzil; and the Persian book ornament is never used in this manner in Mughal miniatures, though it occurs in certain Jain and early Rājput sets.<sup>2</sup> May we interpret this miniature as an echo of the lost Lodī or Sūrī schools of painting?

Another rare document of early Indo-Muslim painting must have been acquired by Rāi Singh during his governorship of Burhānpur from 1604 to 1611. It consists of twelve Rāgmālā pictures in a charming style of mixed Turkish, Persian, Deccanī and Hindu elements. This mixed style was the result of the collapse of the great empire of Vijayanagar<sup>3</sup> when after the disastrous battle of Talikota in 1565 its splendid capital was deserted within a few days, and the skilled craftsmen of Vijayanagar had to find patrons elsewhere, in the South or at the courts of the victorious Muslim sultāns. As Hindu musicians and dancing girls were already common at Muslim courts, there was little objection to an art which chiefly served the zenāna. Thus during the next two decades a peculiar style developed at Bijāpur, Ahmadnagar and probably also Golconda, in which motifs of late Vijayanagar art were superimposed on an older Persian tradition going back to Bahmanī times, which in its turn had already been influenced by contemporary Hindu ideals. From Bijāpur come the Nujūm-ul-'Ulūm Manuscript of the Chester-Beatty Collection,<sup>4</sup> London, a Rāgmālā set in the Sv. Roerich Collection, and a miniature of Mālavi Rāgini in the Baroda State Museum,<sup>5</sup> all somewhat heavy, but of an almost ferocious intensity. The Ahmadnagar group, more gracious and animated, but apparently also more influenced by Turkish aesthetic ideals, is represented by the Tārīkh-i Husain Shāhī<sup>6</sup> in the library of the Bhārat Itihās Samshodhak Mandal, Poona, and the Bikānēr Rāgmālā here to be discussed. The Golconda type<sup>7</sup> is at

<sup>1</sup> In absence of other evidence we must conclude that the group of Rājput paintings which stands nearest to the Akbarī style, especially to the Razm-Nāma in the Jaipur Pōthī-Khāna, must represent the Amber School. For the social and cultural influence of the Amber rājās at Akbar's court was far greater than that of any other Rājput prince, even Rāi Singhji of Bikānēr. As the temples prove, Dūndhārī culture was on a much higher level than that of Bikānēr, and thus had really something to offer to the Mughals, though it must, in its turn, have borrowed from Mewār and Mārwar.

<sup>2</sup> Rāgmālā, collection of Professor Svetoslav Roerich; Sarabhai Nawab, Jaina Chitrakalpadruma, Ahmadabad 1936.

<sup>3</sup> 88.

<sup>4</sup> 13, II, pls. 3-5; 128, p. 120 ff., pls. 10-11; 32.

<sup>5</sup> 88a; the disintegration is exemplified in a miniature in the Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benares; echoes can be traced up to the second quarter of the 17th century.

<sup>6</sup> 112, pp. XVII ff., pls. III-VIII; 128, pls. 9-10, p. 137. Only the miniatures dealing with Khūnza Sultān show the Vijayanagar element.

<sup>7</sup> 83; several miniatures in the Baroda State Museum and in the Salābat Jang Collection, Hyderabad.



present only known from later survivals which, like the similar echo in 17th century Bijāpur art, had already lost their original vitality and do not permit conclusions as to the original character of this group. All three varieties, however, must have exercised a great influence on Rājput painting, by way of Mālwa and the Rājput military camps on the Deccan front. For when the disintegration of the Ahmadnagar kingdom, and the introduction of Mughal and, later, Persian fashions at Bijāpur and Golconda forced those painters to resume their wandering, they must have found another home at the Rājput courts. Their influence on the art of Mārwar, Amber and even Bikaner, is obvious; the Hindu female type of the Amber and the Akbar school is an adaptation of that of Deccanī art after 1565, and, in the last instance, of that of Vijayanagar. And there are many miniatures concerning which we are still unable to decide whether they come from the Deccan or from Rājputānā.

The Rāgmālā illustrations at Bikaner (Pl. II, IV) are not dated, but probably belong to the years (1565-1569) when, after the death of Husain Nizām Shāh, the brothers of the regent queen-mother, Khūnza Sultāna,<sup>1</sup> dissipated the public treasures in the company of Hindu concubines, dancing girls and singers (Colour plates II and IV). There is a dainty and sophisticated prettiness in them, playful and frivolous, yet with an undertone of sadness, a paradise of pleasure, but overshadowed by a suppressed anticipation of tragedy. The gardens of Hasht-Bihisht, with their rivulets and slim trees, surround the cupolas, vast open vaults (Aiwāns) and lofty halls of lightly built, gorgeous Persian pavilions. Walls and domes are covered with the glowing blues, vermilions, greens and gold of encaustic tiles; the domes follow the Deccanī fashion of the late Bahmanī Empire, the pointed and cusped arches foreshadow the later Deccanī and Mughal type, and some of the pillars are swathed in costly brocades. The furniture, as in the early Rājput miniatures, still adheres to forms already traceable on the earliest Śaka coins. In these gardens and pleasure houses men in long coats and small pagris disport themselves with elegant frail damsels—most of them of an exceptionally fair type—decked in brocade dresses, with transparent sārīs over the loose black hair, and masses of jewellery, especially sets of big golden disks over the ears. Their bodies are slim, fashionably elongated, with tiny heads, hands and feet, and they seem to think of nothing but love. They bathe, sing, play on long, fragile vinās, swing, dance with young men, sit on their knees, caressing and caressed. But tragedy is passing over this world of gaiety. A lady is mourning by the side of a dying or dead man. Is she Khūnza Sultāna by the deathbed of the dying Husain Nizām Shāh? It is difficult to say. Individual portraits were frequently introduced into such genre<sup>2</sup> or religious pictures both in India and in Europe. But the scenes are intended as Rāginī illustrations, representations of musical modes and melodies. However, four labels only can be read: Hindol Rāg and Kāmod, Dhānāsri and Nat-Balhārikā Rāginis.

Like all work of the 16th century, with its contradictory moods, but creative vitality, these miniatures reveal various influences at work and open new perspectives, without, however, falling into a cheap eclecticism:—old Hindu motifs, such as the Śalabhanjikā and the various postures of the Surasundarīs of the Mediaeval temples, even a big peacock seen front view as on the late Buddhist Mahāmāyūrī Dhārinī charms; then, the Vijayanagar ladies' costumes and type; and Rājput peacocks, strolling through meadows and over roofs, or crying in the rain of the monsoon nights; Persian palaces, male fashions and border arabesques, Turkish faces and the semi-Chinese trees introduced into Irānian art by the Mongols, and finally rainbows and golden skies with flying birds, which we shall meet again in classic Mughal painting. Yet basically the spirit is the same as in early Rājput pictorial art: the geometrical composition, the reduction of the size of accessory or marginal objects, the imperfect relation of the figures to the background, the atmosphere of erotic exaltation and the mystic transfiguration of nature. Yet it is no less remote from contemporary Rājput art than from Mughal painting. It is not a young, simple, mystic art full of the wonder of life, but a sophis-

<sup>1</sup> 72, p. 378 f.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 108 note 1.



ticated and fashionable *fin de siècle* style, living in an artificial paradise. Khūnza Sultāna's son, Murtazā, proved a madman on the throne, and, under his successors, the kingdom quickly disintegrated.

### 3. *Rājput Painting under the Impact of Mughal Art.*

Whereas Deccanī influence pervades early Rājput painting almost imperceptibly, the impact of Mughal art and its victory can be followed step by step. Mughal realism, Akbar's and Jahāngīr's curiosity in all details of life, the painstaking, detailed work of the leading Persian masters, and, finally, European influence, had all combined to develop a strong naturalistic strain in Mughal painting, which conflicted with the idealism of early Rājput art. But in the long run the secular realism and pomp of Mughal court civilization was bound to impress the most successful, i.e. most realistic, Rājput rulers; and Mughal aesthetic ideals penetrated Rājput art. Not that Mughal painting simply superseded the Rājput tradition. Since Akbar's reign and, even more, since Jahāngīr's Mughal painting had been transformed from an Indian imitation of Persian art into a "realistic" variety of Rājput art,<sup>1</sup> and thus Rājput painting as such was able to withstand the Mughal style for a whole century. General conception, composition, and spirit continued to be truly Rājput; but Mughal technical and decorative details, portrait heads, minute reproductions of hair and feathers, detailed observation of flowers, leaves, architectural forms, gorgeous ornaments, even chiaroscuro and experiments in perspective intruded more and more, until, at the end of the century, Rājput painting had been almost completely transformed by Mughal art.

This process started in Akbar's later years in that Rājput state, which had not only to thank the Mughal alliance for all its successes, but was also the neighbour of the imperial court—Dhūndhār-Amber-Jaipur. Until the fall of the empire Jaipur continued to be the first court to take over the latest Mughal and, at last, even European fashions, and to hand them on to the rest of Rājputānā. In the Lallgarh collection at Bīkānēr there are some illustrations to a Gītāgovinda manuscript (Pl. VII) which belong to that early Mughal school of Amber. Their execution is somewhat crude and hesitant, but the result is pleasing, in one case even of great beauty. A Rāgmālā set in a Jaipur private collection<sup>2</sup> and several Rāgmālā and Rasikpriyā illustrations in the Baroda State Museum<sup>3</sup> show the progressive assimilation of the Mughal style at Amber, until under Mīrzā Rājā Jai Singh (1625-1667), the architecture of Shāh-jahān, in all its luxury and refinement, was introduced in the Jai Mandir and Sukhnivās of Amber Palace, and the difference between Mughal and Rājput painting was almost obliterated. This is evident not only from a series of miniatures incorporated in a Durgā Saptasati Manuscript in the Anūp Singh Sanskrit Library, but also from an illustrated manuscript of the Satsai of Bihārī-Lāl, Jai Singh's court poet, dated 1647, in the collection of Mahārāj Śrī Māndhātā Singhji, the former Prime Minister of Bīkānēr.<sup>4</sup> Though the Rājput character of these miniatures is still discernible, they give the impression of being classical, though somewhat "provincial" Mughal. This type remained long in fashion, and was often copied, especially in the early 19th century, for such work as the Bhāgavata Purāna and Ganēśa Stotra, of which there are good examples in the Anūp Singh Sanskrit Library, Bīkānēr, and elsewhere. The next to follow was Bīr Singh Deo of Orchhā (1602-1628)<sup>5</sup> whose palaces at Orchhā and Dātīā reveal an odd, but harmonious eclecticism combining Gujarātī, early Rājput, Mālwa and Mughal elements. These are also evident in the wall paintings, and in some Rasikpriyā fragments executed for Bīr Singh Deo's brother, Indrajit Singh of Kachhoā.<sup>6</sup> Other wall paintings in the Rāj Mandir at Orchhā prove the complete victory of the Mughal style in the second half of the 17th century. At Jodhpur we can trace the same process during the reigns of Sūr and Gaj Singh in the few fragments of painting preserved in other states<sup>7</sup>; the earlier royal collections at Jodhpur had been completely destroyed during Aurangzēb's occupation of Mārwar.

<sup>1</sup> Analysis of style makes this interpretation the only one possible. That it has hitherto not been envisaged, is due to an insufficient knowledge of Rājput art as a whole and of the beginnings of Rājput painting in particular. Rājput art had begun to assume shape long before the development of the Mughal state and Mughal art, and grew irresistibly during the period of close alliance with the Mughals in the reign of Akbar; see also 197.

<sup>2</sup> 76, pls. 2B, 7A, 12A, 13C, 56C, 57, 58D, 62C, 72D, 75D, 76A, 77B. Some similar miniatures in the Baroda State Museum.

<sup>3</sup> 99b.

<sup>4</sup> 86.

<sup>5</sup> 50; 53.

<sup>6</sup> Mainly Jaipur, Būndī, and also Udaipur; see also 99d.



In Bikanēr this process set in rather late, for with Rāi Singhjī's death the state had lost its prominent position and many of its resources. To the reign of Dalpat Singh may tentatively be attributed three Rāginī pictures in the Ajit Ghose Collection, Calcutta<sup>1</sup>; the prince depicted resembles the portraits of Dalpat Singh, and the architectural background is the Zenāna Palace of Bikanēr Fort, as it must have appeared at that time.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding a suggestion of contemporary Mughal ornament and architectural forms, these miniatures still follow the early Rājput tradition. But the style is in decline. The composition is overcrowded with innumerable architectural details and scenes of court life, the sureness of line is gone, the spirit secularized, and only a certain decorative charm is left.

Another aspect of this elaboration of a late style is presented by Jain book covers in gold lacquer, such as have been preserved at Bikanēr,<sup>3</sup> Jodhpur, Pātan-Anhilwāda, and elsewhere. The history of this technique is not yet explored. The scenes, Jain āchāryas preaching before Akbar or Jahāngīr, dancing girls, processions, auspicious symbols and so on, are executed either in outline or in bas-relief, in a rather conventional style. The subsequent persecution of the Jains by Jahāngīr made an end to this luxury art.

The following years leave a confused impression. Several widely differing styles exist side by side in the old palace collections. That they had been collected at various places seems unlikely in the light of the general cultural trends under Sūr Singhjī. Rather it seems that during these years, as again in the middle of the 19th century, Bikanēr was the last refuge for the earlier Rājasthānī art, now everywhere on the retreat before the Mughal court fashions. A Bārā-Māsa ("Twelve Months") series, of which only nine leaves remain, with its sentimental treatment and figures with too heavy heads and too short legs may be regarded as the last representative of the old Bikanēr school. Other miniatures, among them a Krishna-Murlidhār painted by Hamīd Ahmad, son of Gullū, come very near to the "Basohli" paintings of the Panjāb Himālaya. They are, as it were, the "Baroque" phase of the early Amber school which was then disappearing. As already mentioned, there are strong reasons to take the Nūrpur-Basohli school as a continuation of the Amber style; these Bikanēr pictures are accordingly documents either of an intermediate stage of this migration or of a parallel, but shortlived movement. A third series includes a Rāgmālā of 33 pictures, with round heads, exaggerated eyes, vivid poses and rather crude architectural backgrounds, and examples in the Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benares, the Baroda State Museum,<sup>4</sup> the Roerich Collection, and elsewhere. It may possibly form the link between the late Amber-Basohli style and a Mughal-Rājput style not rare in Jahāngīr's time, examples of which are a Rāgmālā of nine pictures at Bikanēr, the fragmentary Rāgmālā in Berlin (acquired by the Grand Elector of Brandenburg<sup>5</sup>), and other leaves at Baroda, Bombay, Benares and elsewhere.

The Mughal style proper made its first appearance under Karan Singhjī and Anūp Singhjī, both of whom spent most of their time in the Mughal army and thus probably attached minor Mughal painters to their retinues. Rāi Singh had already collected some good examples of Akbar's court atelier. A portrait in Lallgarh Palace (DR. 30) shows the old hero, swarthy, corpulent and weary, in a white pointed coat over flowered vermillion trousers, with golden pagri and shoes, and resting on a heavy stick. It is an excellent painting with the conventional lime-green background and slight indication of sky and grass, so characteristic of the official portraits of Jahāngīr's court, and, though not signed, must have been made by the same famous masters who were responsible for the portraits in the Jahāngīr Album formerly at Berlin<sup>6</sup>, and others elsewhere. Either Rāi Singhjī or Sūr Singhjī must also have collected the pictures of two yoginīs (DR. 58), which have their counterparts in the Jahāngīr Album,<sup>7</sup> and the Perī (DN. 22) who is seated playing a harp, in a silver howdah on the back of a magic camel composed of various animals and of drinking or sporting human figures in Jahāngīrī costume. A similar elephant (DN. 23), a yogī reading in an hermitage (DR. 59) and some clumsy

<sup>1</sup> 76, pls. 34B, 54C, 93D.

<sup>2</sup> This architectural background can be reconstructed, as very little of the original structure was pulled down and the later rooms built into and between the older ones.

<sup>4</sup> 99d, fig. 7.

<sup>5</sup> 82.

<sup>6</sup> 133.

<sup>7</sup> Agarchand Nahata Collection.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* pl. 40, fol. 6b; pl. 41, fol. 13a.



copies of the famous animal studies of Mansūr, must however be of the Shāhjahān period.

Of Karan Singhji we have two portraits in the best Shāhjahān style (DR. 23 and DR. 36); they reveal a rather slow-witted, but honest and energetic, almost obstinate character. Other portraits in Gangā Nivās, Bikanēr Fort, show Shāhjahān—probably a careful, but not quite successful copy of an official portrait, rāo Ratan Hada of Būndī (about 1605-1625) and Rāo Sīyājī of Kanauj, the founder of the Rāthor dynasty (DN. 6). The latter is an imaginative portrait,<sup>1</sup> inspired partly by the great Rāi Singhji's giant figure and partly by the Persian costume of the court of Shāh 'Abbās the Great—a rather naïve device to express the difference of time and culture, though the picture as a whole is a worthy accomplishment.

Most pictures, however, deal with genre subjects. Some were presents of artists, such as the Hindu servant girl (DR. 52) with a Chinese vase against a chocolate-brown background, submitted by Ustād Isā at the Holi festival, *Samvat* 1703 (1647), or the little Mughal princess in a flowered golden burka, on a black ground, presented by the painter Mahmād in 1653, or the Mughal girl with a sherbet bottle (DR. 53), dated *Samvat* 1718 (1662). Others must have been ordered by Karan Singhji, as the artists have evidently made concessions to the taste of their Rājput employer. For, although the pictures are executed in the best Mughal style of the Shāhjahān period, the subjects are frequently drawn from Hindī poetic iconography, and the conception is flatter and the colour scheme laid out in broad surfaces as in Rājput art. A Madhu-Mādhavī Rāgini (B3, No. 10) is, on the other hand, completely Mughal in spirit. It is not the idealised spirit of music, but a stupid zenāna girl and her nurse, an old wrinkled woman looking rather like the traditional procuress of Indian romance. The faces are portraits, the scenery, with its lightning breaking down from a rain-heavy night sky, is treated with painstaking, but petty naturalism. Very similar is the treatment of a miniature of Khamāij Rāgini.<sup>2</sup>

A number of pictures represent ladies, alone, in groups or in the company of their maid-servants. One of the best (DR. 62) shows a rānī, dressed in gold brocade, sitting in the garden on a silver throne covered with wine-red cushions. A girl fans her with a chāmara, and an old woman with a stick, apparently some zenāna supervisor, waits for a girl who brings the lady's pet parrot in its cage. The charm of this miniature lies not only in its masterly execution; there is a strange tension in it, an extreme naturalism on the one side, especially in the foliage of the trees reminiscent of the "Dutch mannerism" of Paolo Zamān,<sup>3</sup> and on the other the Rājput romantic idealism, expressed in the treatment of the heads set against the flat lime-green background.

In the other groups of ladies the predilection for gold is even more pronounced, a fashion characteristic of the Deccan, where Karan Singh had been stationed for the greater part of his military career. On the earliest of these<sup>4</sup> (DR. 61) he is represented as a young man in Jahāngirī costume, sitting under a shāmiyāna on a garden terrace, and drinking the wine offered by a kneeling girl, while another fans him and a third, in the foreground, grinds curry powder. The cypresses and other trees of the garden, set off against a deep blue background, are, like the dull crimsons, yellows and reds, characteristic of Persian and Turkish painting which at that time exercised a strong influence on Bijāpur art, as is also suggested by the extensive use of gilding. A similar picture is one of a lady at her toilet (DR. 43). She kneels on a dais and puts on her jewellery, before a mirror which a maidservant holds in front of her; another waiting maid is occupied with her fan. The garden background looks rather archaic, in the same tradition as the preceding picture; the architectural details, however, are already those of the early years of Aurangzeb's reign. Though the lady is a Rājputnī, her maid servants are dressed in Mughal court costume, and this must reflect actual fashion, as in the early 18th century even the Rājput princesses had adopted Mughal dress,<sup>5</sup> which had of course, in its turn, been an adaptation of an earlier Rājputnī costume. Very charming is a small representation (DR. 13) of a delicate lady sitting on a gilded wicker chair in a

<sup>1</sup> There is not the least similarity with Sīyājī's memorial stone from Bithu in the Jodhpur Museum.

<sup>2</sup> 76, pl. 114.

<sup>3</sup> 144, I, p. 124; 200; 33.

<sup>4</sup> A similar miniature 132, pl. 12.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 123 note 3.



golden pavilion. In the foreground the murmuring jets of a little tank play by the side of a champak tree; the sun sets in a gorgeous ecstasy of gold behind a luxuriant garden, and the lady and her maid dream of the husband fighting far away on the Deccan front. The picture is not quite finished, but love and nostalgia have combined to make it an intimate little masterpiece.

Four miniatures, depicting ladies' parties in a more realistic mood, must be included in this Deccani-Mughal group painted at Daulatābād. Two of these (DR. 83 and 87), masterpieces of the highest quality, are very similar in style, though the first is the work of a Hindu, Nāthurām, and the other, painted in *Samvat* 1722 (1666), by a Muslim, Hamīd Rukn-ud-dīn (fig. 83). The hostess and her friend sit, embracing each other, at the side of a small raised garden tank with fountains. In the first picture they are still occupied with a sumptuous meal, in the second they continue their feast with wine, assisted by several servant girls. The cypress garden—probably one of the many Mughal chārbāghs around Daulatābād or Aurangābād, where Karan Singhji had long been stationed—is again treated with that semi-Persian mannerism, which we have already noted as a characteristic of this group. But the elegant, nervous draughtsmanship, the delicate harmony of colours, the perfection of technical execution, and the air of restrained and yet easy social distinction raise them to the highest level attained by Mughal art in the reigns of Jāhāngir and Shāhjahān. They are, in fact, superior to many official pictures of Shāhjahān's later period, and certainly to those of Aurangzeb's court. The third miniature (DR. 84) seems to be the work of an assistant. Though individual figures are good, others are poor and out of balance, and the composition is weak although the pupil has tried to make this good by increasing the number of attendant figures and introducing a group of girl musicians. The fourth picture (DR. 82), by Muhammad Gudarāi, dated *Samvat* 1712 (1656), strikes a satirical note. The banquet has become an orgy, the ladies are already tipsy and one has even lost her Mughal cap.

Karan Singhji's painters at Bikaner could not compete with this Deccani studio, though they, too, worked in a semi-Mughal manner. One of their paintings shows Karan Singh, looking weary and sick, in a procession, perhaps on his return from the Afghān front after the disastrous defeat of Shujā-at Khān. Another represents him in a boat, enjoying the coolness of the Sūrsāgar Tank, and, in the background, the walls of Bikaner Fort, including his own extensions, the Daulat, Fateh and Karan Parols. The execution is rather hesitant, though careful in the details, the colours are dull and dirty, and echoes of the late Akbari and Jahāngiri style are still felt. A Rāgmālā of 14 paintings, set in chocolate-brown margins decorated with Mughal flower ornaments in gold, goes a step further. Though details are elaborated with the usual care of the Mughal artist, there is something of the earlier Rājput tradition of Dalpat and Sūr Singh's time in the strict geometrical organization of the scenes. However, in another Rāgmālā of only 12 illustrations, these archaisms disappear and we are confronted with the still rather simple beginnings of the characteristic Bikaner style, which flourished under the liberal patronage of Karan Singh's successor, Anūp Singhji.

This style however, did not appear before the last two decades of Anūp Singhji's reign when, a few years after the occupation of Mārwar, the emperor Aurangzēb had been forced to retract his anti-Rājput policy and to come to an understanding with Bikaner, Amber and Būndī. This security permitted Anūp Singhji to carry out the comprehensive schemes inspired by his own cultivated tastes. He already had in his service some of Karan Singhji's artists, especially Hamīd Rukn-ud-dīn, and had placed occasional orders with various Mughal painters. Nevertheless his extensive activity as a collector makes it not always easy to distinguish between incidental acquisitions and the work of his own painters.

As one of Aurangzēb's leading generals in the Deccan, Anūp Singhji had ample opportunity to supplement his collection from the booty of Bijāpur, Golconda, Adoni<sup>1</sup>; and other towns. An excellent portrait of Ibrāhīm 'Ādilshāh II of Bijāpur obviously formed part of his booty (Pl. VIII). The

<sup>1</sup> Several miniatures, including the portrait of Ibrāhīm 'Ādilshāh, are marked "Adoni, S. 1746," but probably they were only registered there and had been collected together in the preceding campaigns. Cp. also 31, p. 68.



young king, clad in a wonderful gold brocade coat, is surrounded by a number of courtiers; the style of the drawing is that characteristic of Persian art in the time of Rizā 'Abbāsī, but the gorgeous colouring is purely Deccanī, and the clouds on the horizon resemble those on the early Rājput miniatures from the Orchhā of Madhukar Shāh. A portrait of an otherwise unknown son-in-law of sultān Abū'l-Hassan Qutb Shāh of Golconda displays the same qualities of colour, but the outline is similar to that of Mughal painting, and has that dry quality common to all late Golconda paintings (fig. 90). There are, further, two contemporary portraits of the two Marāṭha rulers, Śivaji and his son Śambhūji, the latter the work of a certain Hasan, and dated *Samvat* 1743 (1687). Two illustrated Persian manuscripts, Nizāmī's *Lailā-Majnūn*<sup>1</sup> and Sa'dī's *Gulistān* (DN. 9, 15, 17, 20, 38, 41, 48), of the school of Rizā 'Abbāsī, and a Turkish set of illustrations, apparently for an unfinished manuscript of Hamdī's *Yūsuf-u-Zulaikhā* (1492), must also be mentioned here. Whether two Gujarātī-Mughal miniatures, one depicting a "European lady" in a high "Stuart" collar, the other a yoginī, had also been acquired by Anūp Singhji, is difficult to say though it seems probable. Both have the protruding almond-shaped eyes, the heritage of 15th century Jain painting<sup>2</sup>; the latter, of which replicas are found elsewhere, is probably an imaginative portrait of Mīrā Bāi, the favourite mystic poetess of Gujarāt.<sup>3</sup>

Whether the Mughal miniatures of this period were commissioned by Anūp Singhji or otherwise acquired, is even more difficult to decide. A series of small pictures of girls (DR. 4, 45, 73, B5 No. 1, B5 No. 4), lonely, pensive, carrying china vases, or playing with fireworks or with a blue buck, seem to have been artist's presents (nazars) to the governor of Adoni; one is signed by a Qāsim Jal-Muhammad. Some rather indifferent copies (DR. 5: Lady on a Couch; DR. 95: A prince listening to an old woman, possibly a procuress; DR. 80: "Nūrhān"<sup>4</sup> DN. 30: Hawk and Butterflies; DN 31: *Lailā-Majnūn*) may be rather incidental purchases.

There is another genre picture (DR. 44). On a moon-lit garden terrace leading from a bed room, a young prince embraces a girl on his lap. The subject is not rare in later Indian art, but it is signed by Anūp Singh's loyal court painter, Rukn-ud-dīn, and dated *Samvat* 1735 (1678-1679). How could a courtier, and moreover a Muslim, dare to submit such a "frivolous" picture to his lord at the very moment when Aurangzēb was making his second effort to annihilate the Hindu kingdoms, and when Anūp Singh was struggling with Banmālīdās for the throne of Bikānēr? Anūp Singhji, though magnanimous, could be cruel and, if necessary, did not shrink from murder. Was, then, the picture intended as an allegory to wish the ruler future domestic happiness after the poisoning of Banmālīdās in 1679 and the acknowledgment by Aurangzēb of Anūp Singh as rājā? Though Anūp Singh was the eldest legitimate son of Karan Singhji, he must then have been still comparatively young, much younger than the pretender Banmālīdās; for the portraits of 1694 and 1695 show a man still in his forties, and his first children were born not before 1689 and 1690. Anūp Singh's Sesodia rānī, who later became the mother of Sarūp Singhji, must have been still very young; in any case the painter would not have dared to portray her.

If such a possibility is conceded, other genre pictures appear in a different light. In one of them (DR. 64) a richly-dressed rānī with her retinue pays a visit at night to a sādhu, sitting under a mango tree before his cave, and listens to his teachings. In another (DR. 63) a "Mughal princess" and her suite, in riding costumes and armed with rifles, have stopped at a hermitage in the hills and offer presents to a Kānphata yogī or yoginī. In a third (DR. 93) a lady is praying before a linga (Bhairavī Rāginī).

1 III.

<sup>2</sup> The style connection in this point is obvious, but the problem of the continuity of tradition offers some difficulties, as most of the 16th century illustrated "Gujarātī" MSS. show rather Rājput affinities; it seems more likely that they actually come from Rājputānā which then could offer better conditions to the encouragement of art than Gujarāt. For examples of the pure contemporary Rājput style see 40, MS. DV. The late 15th century is much too early in view of the Muslim ornament; 40a, MSS. B.17.2278, Ha, Hb, Hg.

<sup>3</sup> As Mīrā Bāi died before the development of Rājput painting, there can be no historical portrait of her. But as the yoginī, playing on a vinā, is the most favourite subject of Gujarātī-Mughal painting, she must be meant to represent the most beloved mystic poetess of Gujarāt. A replica of the miniature is in the Baroda State Museum, where there is also the miniature of a Rājput princess in yogī posture listening to a religious minstrel, probably also intended as Mīrā Bāi.

<sup>4</sup> The "Nūrhān," "Zēb-un-Nisā" etc. portraits in most cases depict other Mughal or Rājput princesses; the fanciful captions were added in order to hide the identity of the ladies portrayed, when the miniatures for one reason or another left the seclusion of the zenāna. 35, p. 20; Cp. p. 108, note 2.



Though the subjects are common in later "Mughal" art, these miniatures must have been painted in Bikanēr. The first is dated in the same critical year *Samvat* 1735, the second is so similar in style that it cannot be separated from the first, and the third, though different, contains so many elements of early Mughal art that it cannot be placed later; and in all of them there is the characteristically Rājput flat, linear conception. And, as in those years of intolerance a Mughal princess would never have visited a sādhu, the princess must be a rānī who had already accepted the Mughal court fashion. Since in the 17th century Rājput painting hardly ever included religious subjects outside the Krishnalilā circle, these scenes form a sort of devotionals, expressions of the anxiety of Hindu society in the days of Aurangzēb's persecution. Perhaps they may be even interpreted as records of real events in those days when Banmālidās was marching on Bikanēr at the head of Mughal contingents and Anūp Singh's family was probably removed to holy Kolāyat or some other place of refuge. This background of actual experience explains the intensity of feeling in these pictures.

Then the mood of the paintings became brighter. Anūp Singhjī had become governor of Aurangābad; after the capture of Golconda he was raised to the rank of mahārājā, and soon afterwards became military governor of the Karnātak districts round Adoni. About the same time the Sesodia rānī must have joined her husband, and possibly a picture (DR. 7) showing a prince on a throne, listening to a girl musician and with his wife seated on his left leg, may refer to this happy reunion, for it is dated 1687. Another (DR. 8), dated 1689 and depicting a lady at her toilet, on a costly throne with golden cushions, may refer to the birth of her son Sarūp Singhjī. The strict seclusion of Rājput ladies<sup>1</sup> does not make such an identification impossible. We have actual portraits of Rājput princesses<sup>2</sup>; and Captain Boileau who visited Bikanēr in 1835 makes it clear that these genre pictures, though anonymous to the outside world, were real portraits of rānīs and princesses. The pictures here discussed, works of a venerable old man, were intended for the zenāna. It is, thus, tempting to connect another lady's portrait (DR. 42) with Anūp Singh's Rājavat Rānī, who bore him Sujān Singh in 1690. She kneels on a high dais under a mango tree and puts on two wreaths. Far beyond the zenāna court the view goes out over the wide mountain scenery bathed in blue moonlight. A similar moonlit scene forms the background to one of Anūp Singhjī's portraits (DN. 5) of those same years (Frontispiece).

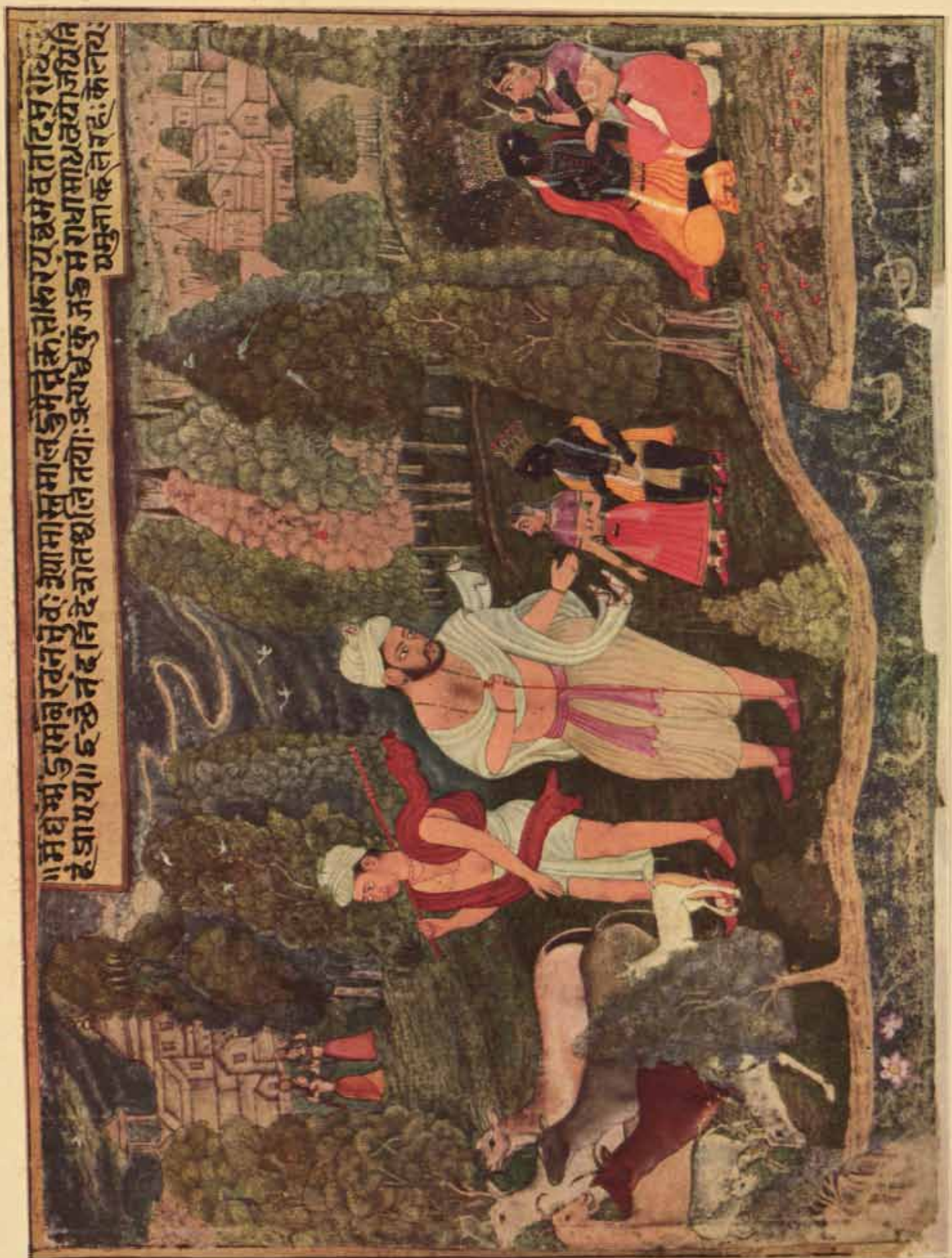
Fortunately we are on a firmer ground with other miniatures, especially with the numerous portraits of Anūp Singh, of his brothers, and of other relatives and friends. In a fine, colour-heightened drawing (DR. 17) in the best Shāhjahān style, very similar to that of his father (DR. 23), Anūp Singhjī is portrayed as a young boy, bow and arrows in his hands. Another (DR. 28), an excellent example of the early Aurangzēb style, shows the prince approximately at the time of his accession to the throne; a third (DN. 5) represents the lord of Adoni galloping on a brown charger through moon-lit mountain scenery (Frontispiece); in the fourth, dated 1695 and now in the Agarchand Nahta collection, the head only is drawn, apparently by the same Bikanēr master who had executed an, already discussed, Rāgmālā for Karan Singhjī. Other portraits are devoted to his brothers, Keśrī Singh (DR. 37; and DN. 4)—(Plate VI) and Pādam Singh (DR. 38 and, in the Gangā Nivās, another by Nathū, 1687-8), his son Raghunāth Singh (DR. 33), and finally to Mohan Singh (DR. 34), all strong and valiant warriors, but none endowed with the shrewd intelligence, broad outlook, reticence and fierce energy of Anūp Singhjī. Other portraits (DN. 54, etc.) represent Bār Singh Deo Kachhwāha or Shekhavat, a comrade in arms and friends of Anūp Singh. He seems to be the same person as Bīr Singh Raesalot of Khandela who was Aurangzeb's commander of Panhāla in 1701.

The difference between Anūp Singhjī and his brothers is most apparent in a "Hunt of Mahārājā

<sup>1</sup> Though there are no portraits on which the lady's name is inscribed, the conclusion forces itself on the student as a result of the following observations: (1) In the two portraits of Sujān Singhjī and his "queen" at Bikanēr and Baroda the lady exhibits the same individual features. (2) There exists quite a number of Rāgmālīs and Nāyika-Nāyika-Bheda sets where not only the portrait of a rājā is introduced as onlooker or hero, but where also the principal female figure repeats the same individual features. (3) Single portraits, such as the "Zeb-un-Nisā" in the Baroda Museum (99b, fig. 6), who obviously is a high-rank Rājputnī of Amber under Mīrzā Rājā Jai Singh I, show emphasized individual features. Cp. also notes 4 on p. 107 and 4 on p. 114 and miniature DR. 60 (daughter of Rājasinghjī, see p. 117).

<sup>2</sup> 35, p. 20.





THE COWHERDS IN THE BRINDA GROVE AND MEETING OF RADHA AND KRISHNA

Illustration to the Gītāgovinda. Mixed Mughal-Kachhwaha Miniature, end of the 16th century.  
Lallgarh Palace, Bikanēr.







Śrī Anūp Singhjī" by a Mughal painter, Rashīd, and dated *Samvat* 1750 (1694) (fig. 77). There the mahārājā and his brothers, side by side on elephants, close in on some lions, which a file of shouting and gesticulating beaters on water buffaloes are driving towards the princes. It is a first-rate work of considerable size (10 in. × 13.2 in.), in a chocolate-brown frame decorated with golden Chinese dragons, phoenixes, and herons attacking bears. The picture itself, of the predominantly green colour-scheme characteristic of many Mughal paintings between 1680 and 1720, includes a great number of human and animal types, excellently observed, and in some cases obviously inspired by European prototypes. Mughals, Rājputs, Deccanīs and Arabs are pictured, all with their characteristic physiognomies and in various carefully-drawn costumes. The painter must have been trained in the best tradition of Shāhjahān's later years and probably worked for the emperor, before the disastrous imperial war policy forced him to enter the service of an influential Rājput prince; for two miniatures in the Chester-Beatty Collection, London<sup>1</sup> and one in the British Museum<sup>2</sup> which show the Emperor Aurangzēb hunting in the Deccan highlands, were the obvious though weaker prototypes of this painting and of that of Mahārājā Kunwar Karan Singh hunting (see below). Later miniatures show Rashīd (Rājīd) already absorbed into the Bikānēr-Rājput school developing under Anūp Singhjī's patronage.

The picture is retrospective, as in 1694 the mahārājā's brothers were dead.<sup>3</sup> This is also the case with several other historical or semi-historical paintings. Karan Singhjī appears as a young prince (Mahārāj Kunwar), playing polo or hunting black buck, in two pictures by Ustād Muhammad, 1694, which are charming, though conventional works of the later Aurangzēb school. Or Aurangzēb is hunting lions (DN. 2) in a rough jungle area enclosed by nets; though the draughtsmanship is somewhat crude and the figures rather petty, the slope of the jungle down to a dry nulla, with its wild life, is exceptionally well observed. A last coloured drawing (DN. 32), inspired by one of the war scenes in the South Kensington Akbar-Nāma<sup>4</sup> but unfinished and poorly drawn, seems to refer to the siege of Golconda in 1686-87. It is a graphic description of the bloody, but successful Rājput attack on the fort gate which won Anūp Singhjī the emperor's gratitude.

Though all these paintings were executed at the order of Anūp Singhjī, they form part of contemporary Mughal painting, and in few is one made to feel the Rājput taste of the patron. The position, however, is reversed in two comprehensive pictorial works begun by Anūp Singhjī, a "Rasikpriyā" of which 187 beautiful miniatures have been preserved, and a "Bhāgavata Purāna" of which 87 illustrations are still extant. The first was almost completed during his reign, but work on the second was only begun and continued late into the 19th century.

The "Rasikpriyā" was begun, at the time of the siege of Golconda, by the old Rukn-ud-dīn<sup>5</sup> and vigorously continued until the mahārājā's death at Adoni, when the work came to a temporary standstill (figs. 78, 80, 93). In 1712 Sujān Singhjī resumed it, so that when he returned home from the Deccan, the set was more or less completed, though some illustrations were replaced—in the old style—even as late as in the reign of Gaj Singhjī. Rukn-ud-dīn had trained a number of assistants, Muhammad Ustād Bāq, Lutf, Nūr (i), Nūr Muhammad, Gulū and Hasan, son of Ustād Ahmad. Rukn-ud-dīn seems to have died or retired about 1696, when Hasan probably became the head of the studio. Under Sujān Singhjī, Nūrī had become the principal master, and probably the latest contributor (1752) was Ustād Isā Muhammad. The combined efforts of this line of Muslim artists created a work of genuine Rājput spirit and great beauty, which is rather enhanced by the inherent tension of Mughal and Rājput art ideals. Some vital elements of the old Rājput tradition they must have taken over from the local Bikānēr studio, but this

<sup>1</sup> 13, vol. III, pls. 90 and 91.

<sup>2</sup> MS. Stow Or. 16, fol. 29, quoted *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Kesrī Singh fell in the Kāngrā Valley, 1670; Mōhan Singh was assassinated at Daulatābād, 1671; Pādam Singh fell in the war against the Marāthas, 1682.

<sup>4</sup> 123, vol. 17, no. 130, 1915, pl. 4.

<sup>5</sup> The following observations have been reconstructed from the signatures and date entries of the two sets of illustrations.

<sup>6</sup> As already mentioned, the earlier Rājput tradition at that time was more or less dead, and even in Bikānēr only poor remnants can have survived.



influence should not be overestimated.<sup>6</sup> Instead, they completely absorbed the spirit of classic Hindi poetry, an easy task among the Hindu poets and pandits with whom Anūp Singhji surrounded himself. And they must also have carefully studied the old illustrated picture sets of Rāi Singhji's time. For many features have been taken over from the old Bundela, Dhūndhārī and Mārwarī sets: forms of clouds and trees, temples, towers and domes, costumes and mirrors, yellow backgrounds, and above all the division of the pictures into horizontal registers, with the figures "hanging in the air," and the four sub-scenes. Other figures, on the other hand, must have been inspired by Anūp Singhji's collection of old Hindu bronzes; for often Rādhikā looks like some Devī image, and her maid-servant like a Dīpa-Lakshmī. However, the artists tried carefully to hide these archaic elements by means of various "naturalistic" devices, and over the whole they spun a lovely romance full of charming observations of every phase of contemporary Hindu life: forest and fields, irrigation canals and gardens, rivulets and lakes; the heat of noon and the showers of the monsoon rains, starry and moon-lit nights; cows, snakes, tigers, owls, mynas; villagers and cowherds, churning butter and hammering jewelry, pān-sellers and guardsmen; and, finally, all the aspects of Rājput court and zenāna life. The palaces rise, like towers, on simple ogival vaults and develop into storeys of increasingly rich Mughal architecture; in the earliest miniatures the style of Jahāngīr and Shāhjahān prevails<sup>1</sup>, later the more pompous style of Aurangzeb's reign predominates. The costumes are Hindu, though Mughal features occasionally intrude even into the ladies' dresses. Krishna, in yellow dhoti and golden crown, and Rādhā in a gold brocade costume, are depicted in dalliance, separation and union, anger and anguish, disagreement and courtship; and the maid-servants act as helpers and go-betweens. Despite roguery and sentimentality, the scenes are pervaded by a tense erotic passion which is heightened by a wealth of ornament of the most beautiful design and colour. It is not the Braj country around Mathurā in Northern India, it is the heavenly Brindā Grove in Śrī Krishna's Vaikuntha Heaven, mystic scene of the eternal love between God and the soul.

#### 4. *The Victory of Mughal Painting.*

The years after Anūp Singhji's death saw not only a great political, but also a cultural revolution. At the very moment that the Mughal Empire began to crack up, the great ruler, connoisseur and scholar was followed by two minors, whose mothers acted as regents. During this régime those who really held the reins of power, tried to amuse the young Sujān Singh as long as possible with the pleasures of the zenāna. Painting was not only a mirror, but also a necessary ingredient of zenāna life. Artists were to be had for the asking, and thus it is not surprising that Sujān Singh's reign produced innumerable miniatures, well executed and decorative, but not of any exceptional quality—pictures of girls in all moods, in pretty costumes or undressed, at all stages of their toilet, at games, singing, playing musical instruments, setting off fire works, looking at the moon, in love, drinking, tipsy. These pictures are small, nervous, almost neurasthenic. And innumerable religious pictures (fig. 79) appeared again after a long period when hardly any religious subjects had been painted. But they are not deeply religious; they mirror rather the mythological imagination of the zenāna, gods and goddesses like dancing girls in fancy dress, pretty, fashionable, entrancing, but not cosmic symbols and visions. And, of course, the darlings of all women, Krishna and Rādhā, have again received the place of honour, though other gods also win importance, especially the old state deities, Lakshmīnātha and Karnījī.

Under these circumstances the Bhāgavata Purāna, or rather its 10th Skandha, the story of Krishna's childhood, boyish pranks and dalliance with the milkmaids of Gokul, naturally came again into favour. Under Anūp Singhji only a few illustrations had been completed. Now the work was resumed, first in imitation of the style of the big "Rasikpriyā" series, but soon deteriorating into naïveté of composition and pettiness of figure-drawing, covered however with innumerable details and elaborate ornament

<sup>1</sup> A case of the time lag so characteristic of all migrations of style.



in many colours and gold. But at the time of Sujān Singhji's death hardly a quarter had been completed, and successive generations of artists added picture after picture. Under Zorāwar Singhji late Mughal influence became perceptible; under Gaj Singhji not only did the artistic quality improve, but the Mughal "Baroque" typology was introduced; under Sūrat Singhji it degenerated into a nervous decorative pattern; and in the 19th century Jaipur and Jodhpur painters had to keep alive the dying tradition.

However, other pictures must be regarded as serious works of art and historical documents. There is a beautiful miniature (DN.33), probably near Aurangābād, a present of Anūp Singh's painter, Ustād Murād, depicting young Sujān Singhji shooting herons, in the company of young concubines and other girls, from the terrace of a luxurious garden house built in the elaborate late-Mughal architecture of Aurangzēb's time. Though the artist has not succeeded in reproducing the rather difficult posture of the shooting prince, the excitement of the young folks is well caught, and the effect of the warm garden scene against the grey and gold of the garden house is very pleasing. Another miniature (Lallgarh 115 [-245]), in the same warm and sumptuous manner, is very curious (fig. 81). It shows a woman, in ascetic's garb, on whom are waiting two women attendants of the court with a hooka and a sherbet bottle in a luxurious palace garden. The scene is unusual, and it is obvious that the ascetic must have been a lady of high rank. As the picture is dated 1712, when Sujān Singhji must himself have assumed the reins of government, might it be that at that time the rānī retired from the world? In 1715 she appears on another picture, (DR. 57) in a quince-coloured dress, sacrificing to three small golden idols under a lonely tree; and probably a third picture (DR. 3), an illustration of Bhairavī Rāgini, also refers to her. Ādiji Kunwar Devī died some years later, in 1721.<sup>1</sup> One year after the date of the last miniature, in 1716, Sujān Singhji is portrayed on a prancing horse, armed with shield and spear, as commander of his Rāthor contingents. But in 1719 he returned to Bikanēr. On a good painting (DR. 90, fig. 84), we see him in front of Rāi Nivās Palace on a little roofgarden now occupied by the Gaj Mandir Chowk, smoking a hooka and looking down over the parapet where, far-off, the outlines of the Anūp Sāgar Garden glimmer in the night (fig. 84). He is accompanied by his mahārānī, Abhai Kunwar Jaisālmairī<sup>2</sup> or a favourite concubine, who is dressed in trousers and a long transparent costume with frilled collar and starched cap in the latest Mughal fashion, like all Rājput ladies of rank between about 1670 and 1760. The same lady appears in another miniature in the Baroda State Museum, resting at the foot of a garden terrace, surrounded by her ladies-in-waiting, the mahārājā sitting above, smoking his hooka. He looks already rather dull and addicted to opium. A charming small picture of a princess, in Mughal dress, embracing her playmate, who is wearing the traditional Hindu costume and looking at the moon, may perhaps depict one of the mahārājā's daughters (1732). In two miniatures we see also the heir-apparent, Zorāwar Singhji. The earlier one (DR.) by Ahmad Murād, 1722, competently executed, but petty and ill-proportioned, shows the timid boy on a gigantic prancing horse. The other (DN. 56), however, once the property of the Jain Jināsiddha Sūri, is a beautiful piece. Zorāwar Singh is shown hunting on horseback; to the "Sar" in the Thar desert, where after the monsoon some water has accumulated, game of all sorts has come; a cheeta has already killed a boar (?); a hawk is bringing down a white heron; one courtier has shot a hare; lions wander beyond a dune; and the sun sets behind a lonely palmtree. In this picture Mughal naturalism and Rājput idealism unite to produce a perfect impression of the bloom and beauty of life.

To Sujān Singh's last years belong the three beautifully painted doors in the Sujān Mahal (figs. 37 and 38). The leaves of the larger central door are each, divided into five panels depicting mothers suckling their babies on a bed, surrounded by attendants, and girls dancing or playing musical instruments. The leaves of the smaller lateral doors are each filled with a figure of a girl musician, who is standing on the bank of a small pond under a hill crowned by a chhattri, around which the monsoon clouds gather.

<sup>1</sup> Inscription on her funeral slab at Devikund.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of funeral stone at Devikund.



These last paintings reveal a development away from the Mughal manner. The tradition of the painters was unbroken. Anūp Singhji's painters—Rashid (1698), Nūr Muhammad, Qāsim Gullū, Ustād Muhammad (1715), Ustād Isā (1716)—continued to work, though in time others joined them—Sayālī (Sayyid or Sayyid Ali ?) Hassan, Ustād Ahmad Murād (*circa* 1705 and 1722), Gangārām (1735), and Ustād Muhammad Ahmad (1745). But the change of milieu must have affected the style of the pictures. In the first decade after Anūp Singh's death the "nervous" zenāna Mughal style seems to have been at its peak. Then it declined, the figures lost balance and proportion. After the return to Bikanēr it recovered, but became more and more Rājput. Colour contrasts replace chiaroscuro, the lines are simplified to grand, though still subdued curves, sārīs and skirts begin to stand off in swinging outlines, shadowing is reduced to a slight indication of modelling, and the ornamental pattern wins increasing importance. Some pictures remind one of the work of the Kishangarh school, though they have no connection with it. But this development was again brought to a standstill<sup>1</sup> by the war with Abhai Singh of Jodhpur. During Zorāwar Singhji's reign hardly any pictures seem to have been executed, except the continuation of the Bhāgavata Purāna set. And when Bikanēr art recovered during the first twenty years of Gaj Singhji's prosperous reign, it again experienced another wave of Mughal influence.

In these years even the loose federation into which the Mughal Empire had disintegrated, dissolved, the Panjāb and Doāb were devastated, and by the middle of the fifties Mughal art was finally ruined. Thus another batch of refugee artists joined the Bikanēr court.

One group must have come from Lahore. For we find the motif of the Perīs (in pointed early Mughal caps) at that time not only on the ceilings of the Chandar Mahal and Gaj Mandir at Bikanēr, but also on those of Bakhat Singh's palace at Nāgaur and in the Tiji-Māji Temple at Jodhpur in Rājputānā, and in the Umēd Singh's kothī, *circa* 1760, at Brahmor in the Chambā Himālaya, where it is combined with the Christian seraph type. The source of this motif which otherwise is not common in later Mughal art, can only have been Lahore where it first appears in the tile mosaics of Akbar's and Jahāngīr's fort.<sup>2</sup> That these perīs were intended to represent Indian minor deities, āpsaras or surasundarīs, is evident from the paintings and reliefs of various temples in Rājputānā, where they figure in mythological scenes, e.g. in the Pārśvanātha at Mertā Road. The leader of this group of painters was possibly Ustād Shāh Muhammad Abū Rero, who became Gaj Singhji's chief painter.

Others came via Mertā, like Ustād Abū Qāsim and his son, whereas the antecedents of Hasan Mahmūd, Ustād Abū Mahmūd and Ustād Muhammad cannot be traced, though some may have come from the Delhi side. At least the frieze<sup>3</sup> of hunting scenes around the small south-western veranda of the Phul Mahal approaches so near to the style of the Oudh school of Shujā'-ud-daula that one is tempted to connect its painter with the establishment of Safdar Jang, second nawāb of Oudh and prime minister of Ahmad Shāh.

Probably we may attribute to this group also a new treatment in pictures of women. For during Gaj Singh's earlier years portraits or genre pictures of pretty girls played a hardly less important role than in Sujān Singhji's time. Of course, the old types were repeated, but by their side appear small panel-like pictures with light-green backgrounds showing a diminutive girl, represented as about an inch high, sitting on the branch of a willow, pensive, expectant, playing on a sītār or dancing (DR. 71, 1747; DR. 74; DR. 51, 1771; DN. 24; DN. 25, DN. 28, DN. 29, etc.; an elaboration Pl. V). The groups of Sujān Singh and with his queen were also imitated. Two versions which probably were intended only

<sup>1</sup> The Rājput style seems thereafter to have developed chiefly at the court of the Jodhpur pretender Bakhat Singh of Nāgaur. See H. Goetz, *The Nāgaur School of Rajput Painting*, (*Artibus Asiae*, XII, nos. 1-2, p. 89 ff., 1949). Cp. p. 116, note 4.

<sup>2</sup> 32. The perīs appear also in allegorized portraits of Shāhjahān; later they are very rare, but do appear in the imaginary portraits of Ibrāhīm Adham and Hazrat Rābi'a al-Adawlyya. It must, however, be observed that such angels appear at least in one comparatively early Rāgmālā set (Government Art Gallery, Calcutta), probably from Northern Rājputānā (second quarter 17th century?), cp. 76, pls. 16C, 27B, 61, in the Nūrpur Temple and in Gujarēti Jain woodwork, cp. 99c, and *India Antiqua*, Leyden, 1947, pl. opp. p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> 35, p. 18 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Both the royal portrait and the Gaj Mandir can be identified beyond any doubt. Cp. also p. 107, note 4; p. 108, note 1.



for the eyes of the young ruler, have later been labelled "Jahāngīr and Nūrhān," either from ignorance or because of their erotic character. But they are evidently portraits of Gaj Singhji with one of his queens or concubines.<sup>4</sup> Gaj Singhji seems, in his later years at any rate, to have been very strict in regard to public decorum. Despite his well-known weakness for women, there are very few later paintings devoted to zenāna subjects, and most of these have been imported from Jodhpur.

Most of the later pictures are single or group portraits of the ruler and his son Rāj Singh. On the finest of these (DR. 18), which is not dated, but must have been painted about 1765-1770, Gaj Singhji holds council with his most trusted advisers on the terrace of the Gaj Mandir (fig. 85). Dressed in the somewhat extravagant and pompous fashion of the time—an exaggeration of the Mughal fashion under Farrukhsiyar,—the latest with which the Rājputs had been in direct contact—he sits on a silver throne and listens to the reports of four kneeling and one standing councillor (the latter a Muslim). Behind him there rises the new façade of the Gaj Mandir, whereas in the background the vine bowers of the Gaj Sāgar garden and the tower of the Anūp Sāgar can be seen in the night. The artist has not only given a careful and harmonious rendering of the scene, but has also succeeded in bringing out the atmosphere of night and the play of the candle light as beautifully as any Mughal artist. Of course, even this miniature cannot compare with the delicacy and spirit of the best works of Karan and Anūp Singhji's time. Another (DN. 49), dated *Samvat* 1830 (1773-1774) represents the return of Gaj Singhji from the Bhatti expedition (fig. 76). Clad in a golden costume, his shield before him, the mahārājā rides on a richly painted and caparisoned elephant at the head of his army. To the sounds of a band the state banners are carried before the ruler, who is surrounded by his personal attendants. In the background the columns of the army, led by their officers, march over the barren plain towards the city, where the high spire of the Bhāndasar Temple is already visible on the horizon. A gay and animated picture, it reveals hands of very different tradition and mastery, Mughal and Rājput, meticulous and pompous, careless and vivid. In a third group (Gaj Mandir, North Gallery), dated *Samvat* 1814 (1760-1761), the mahārājā sits on the marble terrace of his hunting seat at the lake of Gajner, in the company of his son Rāj Singhji and of his most trusted minister, Mehtā Bakhtawar Singh. In the bluish background beyond the lake troops are passing, perhaps in preparation of a battue. In a fourth miniature (DN.3), the scene of which is also Gajner, Gaj Singhji appears only in the distance, riding on an elephant in the midst of his troops. The chief scene is reserved for the heir-apparent, riding, in an extravagant costume, on a grey horse. His hunters show to him a dead deer and some birds shot on the shore of the lotus-covered lake. This prominence given to the prince may be due to the fact that the picture was submitted by the painter Qāsim in 1765, when Gaj Singh constructed Rājgarh Fort and named it after his son. Relations between father and son slowly became tense, however, until in 1775 Rāj Singh rebelled, then sought asylum at Deshnok, and at last fled to Jodhpur. This bitterness is visible in another portrait of the prince (Gangā Nivās) which is not dated, but cannot be much earlier than 1775.

##### 5. *Late Rājput Painting and the End of the Mughal School.*

During the latter part of Gaj Singhji's reign, that is after 1765, the Mughal style lost its influence over the Bikānēr court. Delhi, now a mere shadow of its former self, had ceased to lead the fashion. Instead, an intensive cultural life had developed at the Rājput courts, which was more and more shaped by the personal tastes of the rulers and their nobles. In Bikānēr the change set in with Gaj Singhji's visits to Jodhpur, Jaipur and Nāthdwāra, but it was very gradual and was not completed until the generation of refugee artists had died out. But this did not mean the end of Mughal painting in Rājputānā. Mughal painters continued to work in smaller places such as Mertā, and occasionally also for the Rājput courts through the whole of the 18th and even the early 19th century. We have examples of genuine Mughal miniatures executed not only for Sūrat, Ratan and Sardār Singhji of Bikānēr, but also for Bijai, Bhīm and Mān Singh of Jodhpur, and Sawai Mādho, Pratāp, Jagat II and Jai Singh III



of Jaipur, even for Sansār Chand II of Kāngrā. But the style was dead and had lost its authority, though for us it is often interesting as a standard of comparison with contemporary Rājput art.

We have already seen that during the last years of Sujān Singhji the Rājput style is the predominant element in Bikanēr painting. The same tendencies were at work, of course, in the other states, in Jaipur<sup>1</sup>, especially during the late years of Sawai Jai Singh and under Sawai Isrī Singh, and in Jodhpur<sup>2</sup> under Abhai and Bakhat Singh. However, as these states had not to pass through such a crisis as Bikanēr under Zorāwar Singhji, there was no collapse of artistic life and, they assimilated the wave of Mughal influence between 1740 and 1760 with less difficulty than Bikanēr. Thus, for instance, the wall paintings in Bakhat Singh's zenāna at Nāgaur<sup>3</sup> are already early examples of the new Rājput style then developing. Related to them may be an expressive Torī Rāgini (B.3 No. 23) at Lallgarh palace, which already anticipates the later evolution of the Jodhpur style, especially the leaf-shaped eyes and the line of the body, and two portraits, of mahārājā Ajit and Abhai Singh of Jodhpur, in the Gaj Mandir. The first representative of the Jaipur school was Katirām Jaipuriya, who painted a portrait of Gaj Singhji (DR. 16) in 1764, at the time when the mahārājā betrothed his daughter Sardār Kaur to Sawai Prithvi Singh, son of Sawai Mādho Singh.

However, the Mughal tradition, though fast declining, lasted until the eighties. It was partly kept alive by the copying of historical portraits, a custom which had already started under Sujān Singh, became common under Gaj Singh, when imaginary portraits of the early Bikanēr rulers were first introduced (*e.g.* the Bikāji, by Ustād Abū Mahmūd, at Gangā Nivās), and degenerated, by the middle of the 19th century, into innumerable pitiable portraits of the whole line of mahārājās. The portraits of Gaj Singhji's time maintain a reasonable standard, *e.g.* those of Sujān Singh, 1784, Mohan Singh, 1784, Anirudh Singh, son of Pādam Singh, 1767 (all at Gangā Nivās), or even that of Gaj Singhji himself by Hasan Mahmūd, 1786.

In the later official portraits Mughal and Rājput elements appear side by side. For instance, in the "Return of Gaj Singhji from the Bhatti Expedition" (DN. 49, fig. 76), the mahārājā, his elephant, the army in the background and the scenery have been executed strictly in the Mughal tradition, whereas the soldiers of his personal suite are the work of a completely different, Rājput hand. This dualism is evident also in the Gajner groups and finally in a rich, but rather crude Bārāmāsā set, where Gaj Singhji's portrait is introduced practically on every page.<sup>4</sup>

The pure Rājput style, with its flat surface treatment, flowing lines, simple colour contrasts and mystic romanticism, is found in the decorative paintings of the Chandar and Phūl Mahal. Their style is fundamentally the same as that in the wall paintings of Bakhat Singh's zenāna at Nāgaur.<sup>5</sup> But the "Rādhā-Krishna Doors" in the Sāl (Vestibule) of the Chandar Mahal have been modelled on the lateral doors of the Sujān Mahal. The panels are longer and narrower. The clouds at the top have disappeared and the mountain has been reduced to a mere formula, whereas the Jumnā river in the foreground has been covered with lotuses and small herons. The elegant figures of Krishna Murlidhār and of the gopī (Rādhā) with her small tray of gifts are elongated and of a perfect beauty of line. Krishna stands on a lotus. Rādhā is dressed in the traditional peasant girl's costume. All the doors repeat the same composition with only slight variation, partly due to the repainting of some scenes in Sūrat Singhji's time. A much greater variety prevails in the frieze round the cornice of the Phūl Mahal. As a matter of fact it consists of two different sets. That along the West, North and East walls is devoted to the Krishna-Lilā: Brindāban and Gokul, cows driven home by the gopas and gopīs ("Hour of Cowdust,") Krishna on a hill top, the Wish Cow (Kāmadhenu), the Salvation of the Elephant King, on the West side; Krishna raising Mount Govardhana, Govardhana protecting, with outstretched hands, the gopas, Krishna and Sudāma, Dāna Lilā, Krishna playing the flute amongst the cows, on the North side; Krishna at the Holi festival, Krishna in Vaikuntha (?), bathing milkmaids,

<sup>1</sup> 99b.

<sup>2</sup> 99d; see also p. 114, note 2.

<sup>3</sup> A similar set in the Baroda Museum.

<sup>4</sup> 97.



on the East side. The scenes, now so dark from varnish that they can be seen only with the help of a ladder, merge one into the other. They are loosely composed and rather conventional, but of great charm. Mount Govardhan's many hands remind one of Amenophis IV's gracious god, Aton, in the ancient Egyptian reliefs of the New Kingdom. The southern cornice and the beam separating the ceiling of the southern extension from the rest of the room seem to be later additions and their rather indifferent pictures, copied from some poor Rāgmālā and Nāyikā sets, cannot compare with the original frieze.

Parallel to the almost hieratic aestheticism of these paintings there developed a more popular style content naïvely to tell a story. The most interesting example of this type (DN. 51) shows us the wedding procession of prince Rāj Singh under the walls of Bīkānēr Fort. Behind a mounted band, an elephant with the state flag, horses and dancing girls, rides the prince, who is about 15 years old. He is seated on an elephant in a golden howda and surrounded by a crowd of attendants. Next there follows the palanquin of the bride accompanied by maids, attendants and soldiers. A cavalcade of nobles brings up the rear. From the jharokhā of the Karan Mahal, Gaj Singhjī views the procession. This rather crude, though exact miniature is important for the architectural history of Bīkānēr as the oldest complete view of most of the Fort palaces. In a similar style are the rather crude illustrations in the "Phutkar-Bātān" and "Suda Budu Salingā ri Bāt" manuscripts, both novels, of the Anūp Singhjī Library ( $\frac{176}{177}$  [18] and  $\frac{177}{178}$  [17]) and a number of late Jain miniatures and rolls in the Agarchand Nahta Collection.

After the brief interlude of Rāj Singhjī's reign of ten days, which has been commemorated by a single portrait (DR.) of the sick man, sitting heavily on a silver throne and smoking a hooka, and by another of the sickly baby Pratāp Singh [DR.], in the Oudh style of Āsaf-ud-daula, the new style reached its full maturity under his successor Sūrat Singh, though in the official portraits of the ruler, where it had always been strongest, Mughal influence lingered on until the early 19th century. Thus in Sūrat Singhjī's earliest portrait (DR. 25), by Ustād Ahmad Qāsim, possibly a replica of a picture sent to Bijai Singh of Jodhpur with other tokens of friendship in 1791, there is still a perceptible Mughal strain, though the drawing is purely Rājput. It is weaker in the excellent portrait of Sūrat Singhjī on horseback (DN. 1), which, from its scenery, seems to refer to the foundation of Sūratgarh in 1799 and is evidently modelled on the portrait of Gaj Singhjī mounted on an elephant ("Return from the Bhatti Campaign," DN. 3); it has almost disappeared in the group (DR. 24, fig. 82), by Ustād Qāsim, which shows the Jodhpur pretender Dhonkal Singh, and the baby prince Ratan Singh on the mahārājā's lap, 1809 (fig. 82); it has completely disappeared in the picture (DR. 31) of his conference with guru Āyasjī Deonāthjī, the Kānphata spiritual guide of Mān Singh of Jodhpur, 1813, and in the single portrait of the mahārājā on horseback (DN. 7) by Ustād Īshā Abū Gajdhar (about 1810-20). Instead, the flow of lines achieved an unprecedented harmony and sureness about 1800, and began to decline during the last two decades of Sūrat Singhjī's reign. Fashions reached the very limit of extravagance. The turbans (kirkidār pagrī) of the aristocracy were piled up like towers—the Jaisālmerī people derided them as "camel pack-saddles"—costumes were as stiff and voluminous as crinolines, and eyes were elongated like leaves. Women are represented (DN. 25, DR. 46, DR. 47, DR. 78) with eyes extended up to the hair, protruding breasts and heavy buttocks, excessively narrow waists and skin the colour of saffron. These mannerisms, a peculiarity of the late Jodhpur school, were adopted by Bīkānēr in the nineties: a good example is D. 47, dated *Samvat* 1851 (1794-1795). The original Sūrat Singh style was not affected by these exaggerations, as is proved by the charming portrait (DR. 60, fig. 86) of the daughter of Rāj Singhjī, by "the boy" of Ustād Hamīd Ahmad, 1798-1799 ("Sabī mahārāj-kunvarinī Rāj Singhjī-ri najar kiya Ustād Hamed Ahmad-ri bete-ri kām *Samvat* 1855"). It is the last miniature in which the Mughal women's costume is found, and probably only because it had been copied from some other picture; for the scenery, with its opulent mango gardens, river and mountains is unknown to Western Rājputānā,

<sup>1</sup> Jodhpur Museum collection; cp. also the portraits of Jodhpur sardārs in the Lallgarh Collection; and 99d.



which fact, however, does not contradict the statement of the inscription that the portraits of the princess (and of her companion) had actually been taken by a boy, against whose visit to the zenāna there could be no serious objection.

The extravagance of the male fashions must also have been inspired by the Jodhpur of Mān Singh,<sup>1</sup> though the Bikanēr court overdid this imitation. Contemporary Jaipur, though no less sophisticated and artificial, was much more restrained, but on the other hand never attained that entrancing wild rhythm of line so characteristic of late Rāthor painting which, in its turn, was carried to excess by the Jaisālmēr School, for example in the portrait of Rāval Akhai Singh (1722-1762), by Ustād Sabdī and dated *Samvat* 1843 (1786-1787). Jaipur miniatures of the time are also well represented in the Bikanēr collections, and some Sītā-Rāma scenes are worked into the mosaic niches of the Anūp Mahal (fig. 49). Late Jaipur illustrated manuscripts (Bhāgavata Purāna, Durgā Saptasati, Ganēśa Stotra) are in the Anūp Singh Library. Later, Jaipur artists even visited Bikanēr, the latest (1880-1881) being Chhotū-Rām Jaipuriya, whose work is also found in other states, and Bhīm Sen (1882). Kishangarh is represented by a portrait (DN. 53) of mahārājā Pratāp Singh (died 1797). It is a conventional picture of the mahārājā on horseback, with a view of Rūpnagar Town in the background, in the traditional restrained late semi-Mughal style, very different from that peculiar variety of the extravagant late Jodhpur style which developed under his successor Kalyān Singh (1797-1832).

Most of the Mughal miniatures of the time repeat the old Rāgmālā (DR. 1, DR. 6, DR. 9, DR. 12, DR. 15, DR. 91, DR. 94, etc.) and zenāna subjects. They are carefully painted and richly ornamented, but stiff and lifeless when compared with contemporary Rājput work. Some, however, deserve mention. The picture of a Mughal Lady (B3, No. 8) by Ghāzī Rām (1814-15), is a remarkable example of the excessive artificiality and elaboration of jewellery then in fashion. The romantic picture of two girls playing with fireworks (B3, No. 7), by Ustād Abū Muhammad (1804-1805), is above the average in quality. A large-size miniature (DN. 40), by Ustād Abū Bās (? Bāq), 1805, shows the young emperor Muhammad Shāh hunting in the company of his ladies. Like the already noted portrait of the young Sujān Singhji shooting birds, it catches the excitement of the young people, but the conventionality of the stiff figures, overelongated and saffron-painted, cannot compare with the beauty of the earlier work. Finally, there are three variations (DN. 34, DN. 35, DN. 37) on a scene of an abduction by night, a prince riding on an elephant under a palace balcony from which a young girl tries to climb down to him, with the assistance of her old nurse. One label calls the scene "Pati milan sanyog," which would mean that the girl had already been secretly married to the young prince, a motif well known in late Indian novels. The story is supposed to be that of Jallū and Mārū,<sup>1</sup> which is very similar to the better known romance of Hīr and Rānjhā; but a Jodhpur miniature calls the girl princess Būbna, and one of the miniatures here discussed identifies the prince with Rām Singh, Rāi Singhji's youngest brother, who had actually been murdered in a similar affair.

The pure Rājput style was at its best at Bikanēr at the turn of the century. The best examples are the lateral doors of the Anūp Mahal, which justly attracted the attention of A. K. Coomaraswamy,<sup>2</sup> though he dated them too early, not realizing that they belonged not to the original building of Anūp Singhji, but to a renovation of more than a hundred years later. The motif, cranes circling in a violent rain shower during a monsoon thunderstorm, is an old one, and every detail might be traced in the art of the 16th and 17th centuries. But it is executed with an aesthetic sureness of line and composition which we otherwise know only in Far Eastern art, and which induced Sir George Watt and Dr. Percy Brown<sup>3</sup> to search for Chinese influence, where we actually have to do merely with a case of convergence of taste.

The varnished paintings on the door leaves and on the ceiling of the anteroom of the Chandar

<sup>1</sup> An illustration of the early 17th century in the Baroda State Museum; more exactly Dhola Rāi, founder of the Kachhwāha house, and the Chauhān princess Mārōnī.

<sup>2</sup> 49, pl. 8; 236, pp. 162 ff., p. 168, p. 170 (ill.), p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> 236, pp. 162 f., p. 168, p. 170, p. 180.



Mahal, however, reveal the rapid decadence of this art in Sūrāt Singhji's later years. The subjects are manyfold: on the doors, Mount Meru, Śiva and Pārvatī, Gaṇeśa, Sūrya, Ambikāji, Karnīji with her rats, Vishnu and the favourite Krishna myths (in one the mahārājā's portrait is found); on the ceiling, Karan Singhji with his four famous sons, a polo game, lion and elephant hunts, an interesting view of Bikānēr Fort, the Krishna stories of the Bhāgavata and a panorama of the Vaikuntha Heaven of Śrīnātha (Vishnu-Krishna) with all its gods.

In line with the "Clouds and Cranes" panels stands a Rāgmālā set (fig. 94), the exquisite ornamental pattern and strong but delicate colour contrasts of which remind one of similar tendencies in modern Western painting, for example in the work of Matisse (fig. 94). In another Bārāmāsā set the same fine ornamental pattern is still preserved, but the colours, though well contrasted, already have an irritatingly gaudy effect. The same is true of many religious miniatures, wall paintings in temples and the ceiling paintings at Devikund, now comprising not only the orthodox deities of the Hindu pantheon, but also the popular local cults, such as Karnīji, in the imagery and costumes of the time. In Jain art too are portrayed not only the favourite Jina legends, such as the Renunciation of Neminātha, but also popular subjects, e.g. girls dancing before a Tīrthankar idol.<sup>1</sup> This re-emergence of the popular pantheon and of its iconography is paralleled by the reappearance of antiquated architectural and pictorial motifs. Both are probably the result of the growing cultural influence of the provincial gentry and the mercantile middle-classes, as the royal authority declined with the growing disorganization of the state.

But the quality of the work continued to fall. Already in the first decade of the 19th century the fine sense of line, composition and proportion was increasingly lost. And the pictures of the last decade of Sūrāt Singhji's reign are dull and expressionless, mere story-telling not much above the level of conventional folk art. Whereas in Jodhpur the decline of pictorial art came as late as about 1850-1870, in Jaipur as late as the middle of the century, the collapse occurred earlier in Bikānēr, in the last twenty years of Sūrāt Singhji's reign and in that of Ratan Singhji. Of course, pictorial art did not disappear; it has survived up to the present day, but merely as a lifeless craft tradition, producing poor and expressionless mechanical copies of the treasures of a once living and highly sensitive past. Apart from the periodical exhaustion inevitable in every art, it was crippled by lack of understanding and royal patronage, and by the infiltration of new ideas, especially the introduction of the camera lucida by Captain Boileau in 1835.<sup>2</sup> The portraits of the later mahārājās of Bikānēr are few, and other scenes of court events are very rare. There are two portraits of Ratan Singhji, one (DR. 21), 1831-1832, a crude imitation of the more elaborate portraits of Sūrāt Singhji, the other a mere adaptation of the old standard formula created in Jahāngīr's days. Most of the portraits of Sardār Singhji (DR. 35, dated 1860-1861, and in the Gaj Mandir) are simply gaudy copies of photographs projected on to the wall decoration of the Gaj Mandir, whereas those of Dūngar Singhji and of his adoptive father Lāl Singhji abandon even that traditional background. The portrait of Dalel Singh, Ratan Singhji's cousin and Dūngar Singhji's greatgrandfather, seems to have been the last official picture not devoted to a ruler. The only miniatures depicting contemporary court events are those of the Gangaur or Badi Tīj Processions of Lāl Singhji, 1879 (DN. 45) and of Dūngar Singhji (DN. 47), crude and gaudy, interesting merely for their record of an acrobatic feature—dancing girls performing on a small platform mounted to the tusks of the procession elephant. Additions were still made to the Bhāgavata Purāna set started by Anūp Singhji; but after Sūrāt Singhji's reign they seem to have been the work of foreign artists who occasionally came to Bikānēr from Jaipur and Jodhpur. Even a few books were illustrated as late as Sardār Singhji's reign, e.g. the "Phutkar bātān" (1788 [14]) and the "Shali Hotra" (9, 303/4, dated 1850-1851) in the Anūp Singh Library; part of their pictures is also by foreign hands.

Local artists were used for the mass production of interior decoration, not unpleasing in its general effect, but crude and lifeless on closer observation. Sardār Singhji painted his extension of the Gaj

<sup>1</sup> Agarchand Nahta Collection, Bikaner.

<sup>2</sup> 35, p. 20.



Mandir, and had also the niches of its rear gallery decorated with varnished representations of the Lakshminātha Temple, Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmana (by a South Indian artist), the idol of Śrinātha at Govardhan (Vallabhāchāryya iconography), and finally Krishna at Brindāban. Dūngar Singhji had the Sardār Nivās ornamented with conventional clouds copied from the Chandar and Anūp Mahals, and the Sardār Mandir with a life-size portrait of his predecessor, copied from a photo. Later he constructed the Chattar Mahal, on the wooden ceiling of which a Ras-Lilā was painted (fig. 48). Though the general effect is charming, the figures are the products of a few stencils imported from Jaipur and copied again and again. Variation is achieved by mechanical changes of the arm positions, of the musical instruments and details of dress. The figures are set in richly elaborated oval cartouches of the type which had come into fashion for the ceilings of the royal chhatris under Sūrat and Ratan Singhji. And in fact, the mausolea represented the only tradition not yet dead. For with increasing wealth marble chhatris were dedicated even to the memories of deceased mahārānis and princes, and so this work was never interrupted. Whether this dying art will survive the birth pangs of a modern India, is more than doubtful. For the bloody Hindu-Muslim tension leading to the creation of Pakistān, has already dispersed the majority of the Bikānēr Muslims.



## VIII. THE INDUSTRIAL ARTS

### 1. *Folk Art.*

Providing as they do for the needs of daily life, the "industrial arts" have been determined, most of all, by the contrast between the desert with its limited opportunities and the wealth of the outside world finding shelter in it. The indigenous industries<sup>1</sup> of the desert are those of the nomad and semi-nomad, work in leather, wool, grass and wood, though, of course, the peculiar type of the articles into which these materials were shaped, was influenced by the cultural imports from outside.

The saddles, headgear, bridles, etc. for horses and camels are of a type very similar to that used in Sind, the Western Panjāb and the Afghān frontier. Leather water bags (chāgal) are exported from Reni. The queer half-moon shape of the water bottles and powder flasks is a natural development from the camels' stomachs from which in many cases they are made. Of the odorous Khus-Khus grass (*Anatherum muricatum*) are fabricated cooling mats and fans, of which Reni has become an export centre. Wool is worked into pile carpets of Persian design, daris (durries), Shatranjis (carpets sewn from cloth pieces), blankets (Loīs and Lonkārs). Cotton is used for Sūsīs, narrow fabrics with alternating darkblue and white or red vertical stripes, also for Darīs (covers) and Sārīs. Like the Sārīs and Darīs, the bodices and petticoats of the women are richly embroidered, especially among the Jāt peasantry, the Gurjars and Mers. Crosses, squares, stars, octagons, trees, birds and animals are laid out geometrically in cross, Phūlkari (darning), Point Russe and herring bone stitches, and the individual pieces of cloth are joined together by lattice stitches. Though occasionally influenced by Persian carpet designs, this type of embroidery, known elsewhere only in the adjoining Hissar and Sirsā districts of the Panjāb, is completely un-Indian, but very common in Southern Russia,<sup>2</sup> the Balkans, Hungary and South Eastern Poland, i.e. in the European area once affected by the nomadic invasions from Central Asia. As folk arts represent old and persistent traditions, they must form part of the original heritage of the Gurjara and other invaders of the 5th to the 8th centuries.

The Rājput type of costume, though later adopted by the Mughals and, thus, spread over the whole of India, is also originally non-Indian. The female "ballerina" skirt and the male short, pointed (quadrangular) skirt with a waist hole in the centre, as well as the tunic with a neck hole, must be derivatives from Irānian costumes first depicted on the reliefs of the Achaemenian kings.<sup>3</sup> There also the later Rājput and Mughal "jāma" (knee-long coat fastened under one shoulder) first appears; later it was introduced into India by the Śakas<sup>4</sup> and continued to be the fashion throughout the Middle Ages, as is shown by the coins. The heavy silver neck-rings<sup>5</sup> (Hauslī) also seem to be of Central Asian origin; but the Haikal neck ornaments (a string with small round hangers or amulets), though known also in the Gandhāra sculptures, had always been very common. On the other hand, the huge ivory bracelets worn by Mārwarī and Bīkānerī women represent an archaic Indian fashion introduced here apparently in the 15th century. Under the influence of successive court fashions, these basic types were variously modified, thus creating the diverse and so far little investigated local, clan and caste dress styles.

### 2. *The Heritage of Early Court Culture.*

Outside the stagnant but still persistent folk tradition, no field of art is so much exposed to destruction as that of delicate and yet hard-worn industrial products. Few of those we know in India, are older than the 19th or, at the earliest, late 18th century. Earlier examples of costumes, carpets, furniture and arms, have been preserved only as exceptional heirlooms valued not only for their beauty, but as symbols of historical rights and glory. The most important of these are the crown insignia, and the

<sup>1</sup> 34, 111, 219, 236; examples also in the Baroda State Museum.

<sup>2</sup> 117, figs. 353, 359, 371, 372, 476.

<sup>3</sup> 161, figs. 191, 193, 206; 38a, figs. 1, 2 top row, 3 top left, 4 top left, 5 top left, 6 right; a related wheel-collar is found on early Rājput miniatures.

<sup>4</sup> 38; 7.

<sup>5</sup> 111, pls. 15-17.



royal thrones. There are two very old and important thrones in Bikānēr State; the throne of the rājās of Pūgal, which is believed to have been brought, in the 7th century, by the Bhatti rulers from their former home at Ghazni in Afghānistān, and the throne of the mahārājās of Bikānēr, which is considered to be that of the last Hindu emperor of Kanauj, Jai Chand. The Pūgal throne (fig. 59) is a primitive piece decorated with carved stars or wheels<sup>1</sup> and floral bands very similar to the ornament found in the 'Abbāsīd palaces of Sāmarrā<sup>2</sup> and in the Ibn Tūlūn Mosque<sup>3</sup> at Fustāt (both middle of the 9th century). It is thus probably the oldest known piece of furniture in India, older than the famous Ghazni doors<sup>4</sup> in Agra Fort which, though they certainly did not form part of the booty from the famous raid of sultān Mahmūd on Somnāth, belong to his tomb. The Kanauj Throne (fig. 60) is also a very rare piece,<sup>5</sup> however, of a less uniform character. Its general shape and most of its ornament are characteristic of Muslim art in the 15th century; but some of its many lattice panels preserve forms of the 11th and 12th centuries, while others are as late as the 18th century. Thus, taken as a whole, the throne cannot be older than rāo Jodha's time, but it seems plausible to accept it as a reconstruction from fragments of an older throne smashed during the temporary collapse of the Rāthor kingdom in the reign of Ranamalla. Rājput tradition demanded such a preservation of dynastic heirlooms. On the other hand these times had not our modern scruples of archaeological and aesthetic exactness. What counted was the material relic, and, as in Mediaeval Europe, there was no objection against reconstructing it in the contemporary fashion as long as at least part of the original material was preserved. As we have already seen, the Rājputs of the 14th to the 16th centuries adopted much of contemporary Muslim culture in all matters appertaining to secular pomp and luxury.

Otherwise very little early material remains. To judge from early Rājput paintings, ordinary furniture was, even in the 16th century, of exactly the same type as that seen on the Śaka and Kushāna coins. Of the type of metal mirror found on the same miniatures two specimens have been preserved and are now in the Museum. Like the mirrors on Mediaeval sculptures, they are convex metal dishes, no longer with a ring and cord on the back, but with a wooden handle. The pearl forehead ornament (Sehra),<sup>6</sup> which is already found on Gujarāṭi miniatures of the 15th century, has been preserved as part of the wedding costume of brides up to the present day. The beautiful old Jain book covers,<sup>7</sup> especially those in gold lacquer, have already been mentioned in another context.

### 3. *The Heritage of the Mughal Period.*

Rāi Singhji's reign, so important for the whole later course of Bikānēri history and civilization, changed all this. Thirty-six kārkhānas or workshops were established<sup>8</sup> which introduced first contemporary Rājput, then Mughal art.

As the contemporary miniatures prove, fashion in costume followed that of the imperial court throughout the period of Mughal vassalage. But only one original costume has come down to us. It is a coat (jāma or fugal<sup>9</sup>) (fig. 62), presented in November 1596 by sultān Salim to Rāi Singhji, in exchange for a cheeta, according to a letter still preserved. (Both the coat and farmān No. 5 of the 29th Āzār 42, are now in the Museum). Many similar presents must have been exchanged between the prince and his father-in-law, though the costliness of the piece lets it appear that it had been intended as more, possibly as an expression of sympathy, after Rāi Singh had successfully crushed Karam Chand's conspiracy. For the coat is tailored from the most costly and beautiful Safavī silk brocade such as was woven only in the kārkhānas of the shāh of Persia himself. Its design consists of vertical stripes into which panels are set stepwise like windows in which a boy and a girl appear, holding flowers, against an alternating blue and wine-red, or green and wine-red background filled with scattered

<sup>1</sup> These stars and wheels are known also in Sind (54, pl. 96; Tombs at Sonda) and early Gujarāṭi-Muslim pottery; but it must originally have been of Central-Asian origin. They are common in woodwork from the Caucasus and South Russia, cp. 117, figs. 191, 194-5, 201, 439, 442, 450-52, 470-1, 510-11.

<sup>2</sup> 113.

<sup>3</sup> 111, pl. 13b.

<sup>4</sup> 74.

<sup>5</sup> For later book covers cp. 31, p. 66.

<sup>6</sup> 42, III, pl. I; 80; 158, pl. 20.

<sup>7</sup> 164, p. 30.

<sup>8</sup> 31, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> 31, p. 15.



flowers. The panels between them which serve both as balustrades and roofs, are filled with Persian verses. The costume fashion and the style—school of Āgha Mirak—are those of about 1570-1580. Sultān Salīm favoured such Persian costumes,<sup>1</sup> probably as an expression of the antagonism towards his father which at last drove him to rebellion.

In the later years of Sujān Singhjī costume fashions began to diverge from the Mughal style. Both length and width of the coat and the size and shape of the turban were more and more exaggerated. This tendency had already begun at the Mughal court under Farrukhsiyar, but was then, under Muhammad Shāh, toned down to a certain restrained effeminacy. At the Rājput courts the exaggerated forms continued so that by the middle of the 18th century both types differed widely. In Gaj Singhjī's later years the height of the turban began to increase until under Sūrat Singhjī it had become a veritable tower. Under Ratan Singhjī Boileau<sup>2</sup> described it as "a large pugree of yellow cloth so fashioned as to have two peaks sticking up on the top of the head in addition to the folds which pass round the brows and back of the head as in all common turbans. The jāma, too, or long gown, which is always worn on state occasions, has an equally singular appearance, being a robe of white cloth fitting as tight to the chest and arms as an European waistcoat with sleeves, and ending in a prodigious skirt like a female petticoat, in which very many yards of fine linen are gathered into full pleats, and resemble the nether garments of a dancing woman much more than the robes of a king and of his courtiers in full dress." During the reign of Sardār Singhjī turban and coat were slowly reduced to more sober forms. But the beard was groomed into fantastic shapes, only to return to natural simplicity again under Dūngar and Gangā Singhjī. Female dress was the usual Hindu one, with a predilection for vermilion and yellow shades. In Karan Singhjī's time however Mughal costume was introduced, became general at the court under Anūp Singhjī,<sup>3</sup> less common during the last years of Sujān Singhjī, almost disappeared in the course of Gaj Singhjī's reign, and completely disappeared under his successor. The traditional Hindu ladies' costume was affected by the high waist and the exaggerated use of jewellery fashionable in the early 19th century.

The carpet industry<sup>4</sup> installed by Rāi Singhjī likewise followed Mughal example and has faithfully retained its designs up to the present day, though now it is merely one of the handicrafts practised in the Central Jail.

For a long time the coins<sup>5</sup> in circulation were those of the Mughal emperors. Of Anūp Singhjī's time a large treasure jar of bronze with its lid and lock is still to be seen in the museum. Gaj Singhjī first obtained the right of coinage from Ahmad Shāh in 1753, after the Hissar expedition, though coins were first issued in 1759 in the name of Shāh 'Ālam II. However, no permanent mint was erected, coins being struck by bankers and merchants under special contract, the durbār merely keeping the die and controlling the expenditure of silver or copper bullion. This die continued to be the same, based on Mughal coins minted in the name of Shāh 'Ālam II, until 1859 when the name of queen Victoria was substituted. But it showed Bīkānēr as mint, together with the date of issue and a symbol mark for the mahārājā, a flag for Gaj Singhjī, a trident for Sūrat Singhjī, a turban star for Ratan Singhjī, an umbrella for Sardār Singhjī, a fly-whisk for Dūngar Singhjī, and a peacock feather whisk for Gangā Singhjī. The silver coins, especially those intended for Nazars (durbār presents) were among the best struck in Rājputānā. Those in copper, however, were very poor until the reforms of Sardār Singhjī.

#### 4. *The Arms Collections.*

Of course, the most important art industry amongst a warrior nation, and that of which the documentation is best preserved, is that serving the purpose of war; arms, armour and military insignia.

<sup>1</sup> 84, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> 35, pp. 23 f.

<sup>3</sup> The adoption of the Mughal ladies' costume was facilitated by the fact that it had itself been taken over from the Rājputs in Jahāngīr's reign, and that many ladies and maid servants in the imperial zenāna had been born Hindus. Both Jahāngīr's and Shāhjahān's mothers had been Rājputnīs.

<sup>4</sup> 31, pp. 72, 76, 86.

<sup>5</sup> 237.



Bikānēr has one of the finest and most comprehensive collections of ancient arms in India, comprising excellent Mughal, Rājput, Deccanī, South Indian, Arab, Abyssinian, Turkish, Moroccan and even some European specimens, most of which had been collected in the course of the late 16th and 17th centuries. It is now housed in the Sūrāt Bilās apartments of the Fort Palace, though some pieces have been transferred to the Museum.

The original military equipment<sup>1</sup> of the Rājputs (e.g. fig. 17) was very simple, putting them at a considerable disadvantage compared with the Muslims. It comprised a short, or long and heavy sword (*pattā*, *khānda*), often broadening from the V-shaped crossbar to the triangular or rounded point, a spear, and bow and arrows for attack, and a stick or steel rod with hand-protection, or a round leather-buckler (*dhāl*) for defence. Two peculiarly Rājput weapons, the *kattār* (short dagger with a horizontal handle between two vertical bars) and the gauntlet sword (*pātā*) are of Deccanī origin and were apparently first introduced during the service of the Rājput princes with the Mughals in the Deccan. In the second half of the 15th century at the latest Muslim arms and armour were adopted by the Rājput chiefs. Rāo Jodha's sword,<sup>2</sup> one of the Bikānēr crown insignia, is a Muslim sabre. The fine damascened hilt was added in the 17th century, but the blade is old. As the brass statuette at Achalgarh, Mount Ābū, of *rānā* Hansrāj of Dūngarpur (dated 1509)<sup>3</sup> proves, such sabres were then not an exception. Other early military heirlooms at Bikānēr<sup>4</sup> are the Bhānwar Dol war drums of *rāo* Chondaji and the *kattār* of Harbuji Sānkhālā, the faithful champion of *rāo* Ranamalla and Jodha, with a hilt of later date.

We would expect Rāi Singhji's time to have been a period of important change in the equipment of the Bikānēr army. But no dated or otherwise remarkable arms of these years can be traced, only survivals in some later pieces. There is a heavy sword (*tēgh*, *khānda*) of a hybrid type common since Akbar's reign, with a Rājput V-crossbar,<sup>5</sup> but with the slightly inclined hilt and guard used by the Mughals (fig. 73). Its ornament is a good example of the early Rājput taste. The rims of the fluted guard and of the crossbar are decorated with a string course, the crossbar is strengthened by a set of heraldic lions attacking elephants,<sup>6</sup> and the end of the hilt is not pointed, but projects in a flower pommel; some palmette motifs on the mount of the blade and on the guard are the only borrowings from contemporary Mughal art. Another example is a sabre (*falchion*, fig. 69) with a brass crossbar also decorated with a stringcourse and two highly stylised peacocks, whereas the pommel is covered with a network of Mughal arabesques, very similar to those found in Anūp Singhji's *chhatrī*. Finally some *kattārs* (fig. 66) have fluted blades, as if covered by a bundle of miniature arrows, their hilt bars are transversely fluted, and the hilts dissolve into beautiful leafwork arabesque.

The oldest Mughal weapon is a *sūsan pattā* (lily leaf) sword bearing the name of "Sultān Jalāl-ud-dīn Akbar" and the date A.H. 1012 (1603, fig. 72). It must remain undecided whether this sword was given by Jahāngīr to *rājā* Sūr Singhji on the occasion of his investiture, or had already been presented by the great Akbar to Rāi Singhji, or was selected merely as a reminder to serve Jahāngīr as faithfully as Sūr Singh's father had served Akbar. The hilt of this historical sword is exceptional, for it comes from a Malay kris.

The costly damascened swords and sabres in pure Mughal taste (figs. 67, 68), were first introduced by Karan Singhji and, therefore, were termed "Karan Shāhī." There is quite a number of them in the Bikānēr collection, all of the light hunting (*shikārgāh*)<sup>7</sup> type with a cross (*Hākim-Shāhī*) hilt or a cross-hilt strengthened by a thin hand-guard (*Hākim-khānī*) often ending in a dragon head; in other cases the pommel is replaced or capped by a crutch. The older pieces (17th century) are decorated with large flowers or birds in silver damascene work, the later ones (second half of the 18th to the 19th centuries)

<sup>1</sup> It can be reconstructed only by means of a comparative study of the innumerable *pāliyās*, *govardhans* and *virāṅkals*.

<sup>2</sup> 31, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> In the office of the Jain community at the Śāntinātha Temple, cp. 99 f.

<sup>4</sup> This is the classic Indian type, at least since the late Gupta period.

<sup>5</sup> This whole technique and ornamentation are Deccanī.

<sup>6</sup> The terminology of Indian arms still is chaotic and needs a critical examination. Many terms are of purely local character and become intelligible only in the light of local history. It would be preferable to use a terminology based on the principal historical types and their variations and combinations. Where no other terms were available, I have followed 65 and 110.



show very rich and delicate decoration in gold *koftgārī* work, flower bouquets, vases, inscription bands, borders, whole garden landscapes with hills and rivers, poplars, willows, mango, plane and palm trees and garden pavilions. On battle swords hilt, crossbar, guard and pommel are heavy and plain; famous for their size and weight are the swords of Anūp Singhji's gigantic brother, Pādam Singh.<sup>1</sup> In 18th century pieces the blade is frequently of the old Hindu type, but inscribed in letters of gold-wire and its neck and one edge strengthened by a cover damascened in gold (fig. 70).

For Kattārs (fig. 66), spear heads, elephant goads (*ankūs*) and long battle axes, however, damascening came into fashion considerably later. For these national Rājput weapons the beautiful cut steel of the early Rājput arms continued to be the favourite decoration, enriched by motifs borrowed from the Deccan or taken from contemporary Rājput miniatures, hunting or battle scenes, or images of the Devī, the mistress over death and war. Mughal motifs infiltrated only slowly, used by the side or as adaptations of earlier Rājput ornament. During the later 17th and even most of the 18th century, the use of damascening was only complementary to cut steel and probably completely damascened Kattārs were first made in Sūrat Singhji's reign.

The blades of more than a dozen of these swords are of European origin. The signatures and marks mention Italian, Portuguese, English and German smiths: Andrea and Piero Ferrara, "Aterro," "Beiro 1632," "Johannes Coll 1551," Solingen.

The stock of foreign arms was considerably increased by the campaigns of Anūp Singhji in the Deccan, especially from the booty which he collected at Adoni.<sup>2</sup> As in the Mughal Empire, foreigners played a prominent role in the Deccan sultanates, but they were of different extraction: Arabs, Abyssinians (*Habshīs*) and even 'Osmānli Turks. There are battle axes of a type best known among the 'Osmānli Janisaries. There are half a dozen swords with ordinary hilts, but with long and broad blades engraved with Abyssinian inscriptions arranged in two or three lines between Coptic crosses, double crosses on a globe, circles, etc. Probably they had belonged to Sidī Mas'ūd<sup>3</sup> or his *Habshī* followers. This Abyssinian general had defeated mahārājā Jai Singh before Bījāpur in 1666-1667, had been regent of Bījāpur from 1678-1680 and after the fall of Bījāpur had held Adoni as a semi-independent principality, until the fort was taken in 1690. Even a pure Sudānese sword and some Moroccan sabres and daggers<sup>4</sup> are among this booty. Another bears, instead of the Abyssinian, an Arabic inscription, arranged in the same manner; the large lettering contains the usual Qōrān quotations, the small central line seems to refer to the owner. No less interesting, though for different reasons, are two South-Indian swords (figs. 63-65). Their blades broaden into an oval near the hilt; and the latter consists of a combination of tigers grasping elephants, lions, dragons, peacocks, flowers and arabesques, arranged in a purely heraldic pattern. The tiger, with a head almost like a *makara* and holding one or several elephants in its claws is a common Deccanī motif. The type makes an oddly archaic impression, reminding one of ancient Egyptian and Babylonian daggers and swords, and of the hilts of Lūristān bronzes.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand the influence of this Deccanī work on the Rājput arms of the 16th and 17th centuries is no less evident than that of Deccanī painting on the Rājput miniatures.

For a long time the Rājputs had used the simple long bow. The Turkish composite bow, though known in Kushān times,<sup>6</sup> had fallen into disuse, but was reintroduced by the Muslims and continued to be used by the side of matchlocks, at least for hunting purposes; however, those late bows were constructed of steel, like that of mahārājā Anūp Singhji in the Bikanēr Museum. Arrow heads are diverse in shape, like miniature spearheads, with and without barbs, or half-moon, or flower-shaped.

<sup>1</sup> Similar historic arms of exceptional size and weight are shown in almost every Rājput, and also some other Indian states.

<sup>2</sup> According to tradition; but quite a number of pieces bear short engraved inscriptions to that purpose.

<sup>3</sup> 72, II, pp. 39; 42, IV, pp. 254, p. 255 f., p. 259, p. 277 f., p. 284 f., p. 290.

<sup>4</sup> These are found also in other states, wherever Arab mercenaries had been employed even in later centuries, e.g. at Hyderabad and Baroda.

<sup>5</sup> 79; the original meaning has, of course, been lost; the rampant animals have survived, but the human or divine figure between them has disappeared.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. 11 for 1908-09, pl. 14c (*Shāhji-kī Dherī Stūpa*).



The quivers are tubes constructed of thin wooden panels, painted with flower arabesques or mythological scenes, and finally varnished. Guns and matchlocks were introduced into Northern India in Humāyūn's time.<sup>1</sup> Maldeo probably made the first use of them in Mārwar, in Mewār they were employed by the Rājputs in the defence of Chitorgarh against Akbar,<sup>2</sup> and the defences of Rāi Singhji's great fort at Bīkānēr provided also loopholes for matchlocks. There are still a number of old matchlocks in the Fort armoury ornamented with ivory intarsia and chiselled steel or brass mountings in the style of the 17th century (fig. 71). However, as the type has survived in Sind, Kāthiāwār and Western Rājputānā up to a much later time, we cannot at present say whether these pieces are really as old as they appear or whether they are merely a survival of the original type. The few old guns still preserved reveal little of special interest. Of the four most important pieces<sup>3</sup> the Kila-Tor was cast by Kusla Lohār of Nāgaur in the time of Gaj Singhji, the Sūrat Ban and Śrī Rām Ban (Sheo Ban) date from Sūrat Singhji's later years, and the Dūngar Ban was cast as late as 1881 by the brass smith Chogā at Bīkānēr. How a beautiful English pistol of the 18th century, inlaid and plated with embossed and engraved silver, found its way to Bīkānēr, is not known.

##### 5. *The Heritage of the later 18th and 19th Centuries.*

After the arms we must mention the royal insignia conferred on the Bīkānēr rulers by the Mughal emperors, especially those of the Mahi Marātib order.<sup>4</sup> They consist of golden globes, fish and dragon heads carried on the top of poles and decorated with crowning knobs, feathers and streamers. These odd emblems are of Sāsānian origin, and closely related in the globes on the crowns of the Sāsānian kings, the orb with the cross in the hands of the Byzantine and Christian-Roman emperors and the dragon banners of the Central-Asian, Irānian and early Germanic tribes. The institution of the Mahi Marātib is ascribed to Khusrau Parviz and connected with his famous romance with Shirīn, daughter of the Byzantine emperor, Maurice. The Mughal emperors took over these insignia as part of their heritage from the world conqueror, Tamerlane, but Jahāngīr seems to have been the first to pay special attention to their astrological symbolism and had himself depicted with symbols of a related type in several allegorical miniatures.<sup>5</sup> Of the Bīkānēr rulers Anūp Singhji was the first to receive the Mahi Marātib on his elevation to the rank of mahārājā; later Gaj Singhji received them again from Ahmad Shāh; and finally Ratan Singhji had them confirmed by Akbar II, on which occasion he was also presented with two palkīs<sup>6</sup> (more exactly an Ambedi and a Nalki) with high-domed roofs in the late Mughal taste, one carried out in white, scarlet and gold, the other in gold and brown.

To this transition period also belong a pair of golden epaulettes, of British type, but decorated with the reliefs of Rādhā-Krishna and of Durgā Nāgnechiji, diamond sarpēches (turban aigrettes) and pearl necklaces. Except for the Kanauj Throne already mentioned all the existing thrones and parade chairs<sup>7</sup> belong to this same period, either "Singhāsans," with lion figures as supports and elbow rests, or dais enclosed by a low curved balustrade (the old "lotus"-seat, padmāsana). One, of lacquered wood, probably belongs to the early part of Sūrat Singhji's reign; the rest, in embossed silver, are not older than that of Sardār Singhji; and all are of rather poor workmanship. The same can also be said of a swing (Hindol) in Sardār Singhji's extension of the Gaj Mandir. Its scaffold is supported by two wooden elephants, and completely covered by innumerable small girl figures, whereas its crossbar is decorated with knobs, miniature chhatris and peacocks with spread or folded tails; similar peacocks support the swing proper. But despite rich gilding the workmanship is poor, a faint echo of the stucco sculptures in the ante-room of the Phul Mahal.

<sup>1</sup> 173; 89. A primitive type, however, had already been used in the army of Muhammad I Bahmani (1358-75). Cp. 42, III, p. 381; 210 p. 17 f., etc.

<sup>2</sup> Mārwar: Direct evidence is missing, but the conclusion is possible on evidence of change in the fortification system. Mewār: cp. 84, fig. 81 (Akbar-Nāma); 13, III, pl. 62.

<sup>3</sup> 212, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> 31, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> 31, p. 15; 1.

<sup>6</sup> 60, pl. 39.

<sup>7</sup> 111, pls. 11 and 12; cp. also 84.





PORTRAIT OF 'IBRAHIM ADILSHAH, SOON AFTER HIS ACCESSION TO THE THRONE,  
(1580-1626).

Deccani Miniature, Bijapur, ca. 1590-1600. From Anup Singhji's booty of Adoni (1689).  
Lallgarh Palace, Bikaner.







On the other hand the bed in the Sleeping Room of the Gaj Mandir is a masterpiece of ivory carving in the late Mughal style, like the sandalwood door, with its beautiful decoration of ivory ledges, leading from the Shish Mahal to the outside gallery. Both were executed for Sūrat Singhji by Delhi workmen. The technique, imported from Vijayanagar and the Deccan, had flourished in the 17th century at Amber and enjoyed a charming revival both at Jaipur and Delhi in the early 19th century.

Most of the 19th century work, however, is in silver. The thrones have already been mentioned. Zorāwar Singhji had dedicated a golden umbrella to the idol of Karniji at Deshnok (about 1740)<sup>1</sup>; Sūrat Singhji added a silver canopy, even then valued at Rs. 10,000.<sup>2</sup> The shrine received also two fine silver doors (fig. 61) with eight reliefs decorated with the embossed figures of sun and moon, Karniji, Ganeśa, the Devī and Śiva in various aspects, all executed in an already conventional, but not yet degenerate style, against a beautiful background of engraved flower arabesques. The silver plating of the "Khāss Deōdhi" door<sup>3</sup> leading to the Anūp Mahal Chowk and executed by order of mahārājā Dūngar Singhji in 1876, however, is already restricted to the careful repetition of late Mughal ornament, though the effect was beautiful enough to be copied later in brass in the modern renovations of the Fort Palace and at Lallgarh. The last piece of any interest is a big silver hooka in the shape of a Lucknow dancing girl who in her one raised hand supports the bowl of the water-pipe, while the other holds a fly-whisk from which springs the hose, ending in a mouthpiece shaped like a little girl. The piece was imported, an example of the half-naturalistic, over-ornate style which flourished in Oudh, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Gujarāt in the sixties of the last century—like the "Mutiny," the last flicker of a dying age.

<sup>1</sup> 164, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> 164, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> 183, pl. 48. Details are mentioned in an inscription engraved across the door.



## IX. CONCLUSION

Our review of the art treasures of Bikānēr has unrolled a panorama very different from the customary conception of later India as a mere aftermath of a great past. It has shown a perplexing wealth and variety of types, of periods of creation, mannerism and decadence, of rising and disappearing local styles, and of interaction and interconnection between various political centres and between different epochs. Thus, in concluding our review, we may well be justified in asking, what have been the driving forces, basic relations and fundamental characteristics of this art, and what has been its position in the general picture of Indian and human civilization.

The cultural life of Bikānēr has been determined by the Thar. The desert, barren and monotonous, is not favourable to the growth of an exuberant local art, though the vitality it demands from its inhabitants, favours a simple and healthy joy in those imported arts which the desert has attracted, sheltered and preserved. Its poverty, on the other hand, has forced its inhabitants to seek employment, wealth and power in the outside world. Thus we find the most primitive local traditions side by side with the finest art treasures from all over India, and even with stray foreign art objects, Persian and Turkish illustrated manuscripts, Abyssinian, Turkish, Moroccan arms, old European prints and English tiles.

The relation of these various elements, therefore, has been determined by the role which the desert played in the course of Indian history. This role, however, was most of the time that of a frontier march between the Indus Valley and the interior of India. As such it was either occupied by the military and commercial outposts of the Indian empires to the East, or it was a military reservoir from which they drew forces to safeguard their frontiers to the West and South; it formed a second-rate kingdom, or it was occupied by the invaders who have overrun India so many times in the past. To the first two situations we owe the masterpieces of Bikānēri art, to the third its provincial aspects and to the last its primitive elements.

To the aboriginal tradition we can ascribe but few, though characteristic art forms—the post-Indus civilization pottery of the North and the archetypes of the govardhans, kīrtistambhas and chhatrīs in the South. The invasions of the Hūnas, Gujjaras and the Indian frontier tribes annihilated the budding colonial civilization and arts planted in the Ghaggar Valley by the Guptas, but at the same time they planted the seeds from which a national Rājput art was to spring many centuries later; and finally they imported a thin, but perceptible substratum of Central Asian (horseman-pāliyās, costumes, furniture, Jat and Gujar embroideries) and Sāsānian (various decorative motifs, such as peacocks and heraldic lions, and jewellery) stylistic elements into both folk and court art.

The relation to the neighbouring civilizations is more obvious. Classic Hindu art came in several waves. The first was the introduction of Gupta terracotta sculpture, in an early form under the Yaudheyas, in its fully developed stage during the time of Gupta control. The second came much later, in the 10th to the 11th centuries, when the Cāhamānas constructed their forts along the trade routes through the Thar desert; it was a provincial variety of the most provincial, but at the same time most vital, of all the Mediaeval styles of Northern India. There followed an import of Gujarātī marble sculpture by Jain traders in the 12th to the 14th centuries, the last of them probably refugees from the collapse of Hindu civilization in Northern India. The last phase, in the 15th and 16th centuries, was a conscious "Renaissance" style, artificially revived from the remnants of the old Gujarātī tradition and from an imitation of the still standing ruins. It disappeared with the growth of a national Rājput art.

Muslim art was first imported from Afghānistān with the "Ghazni" Throne of the Pūgal rājās, a work of the 9th century A.D. Then it appeared along the Northern border, where it left some tombs in a mixed Lodi-Mughal style at Bhatner, the much contested frontier fortress. The third contact was a peaceful infiltration during the "Renaissance" of the 15th to 17th centuries, when Muslim art



forms from Lodī Delhi, Mālwa and Gujarāt were adopted for secular use in the same manner in which traditional Hindu forms were freely assimilated for religious purposes in the formative period of the national Rājput style. The centres of this early Rājput art were Chitorgarh, Jodhpur and Orchhā. After the Rājput alliances with Akbar the Great, however, the leadership in the field of art was transferred to Amber, Bīkānēr and Būndī. Rājput art was then further enriched by many new influences coming from the disintegrating sultanates of the Deccan ; these influences were easily absorbed because in the last analysis they represented a heritage from the last great Hindu empire of the South, Vijayanagar, and had been accommodated only superficially to Deccanī-Muslim needs.

As a result of Akbar's cultural syncretism this last phase of early Rājput art was absorbed into the Mughal style as it flourished during the latter part of Akbar's and the earlier part of Jahāngīr's reigns. For this same reason, however, the Mughal imperial style (from Jahāngīr to Aurangzeb) easily superseded early Rājput art. After Rāi Singhji's death Bīkānēr relapsed into a provincial position, conserving the Fathpur-Sikrī style of architecture and the last remnants of the old Rājput schools of painting and industrial arts until late into the 17th century. With Anūp Singhji it regained not only its political importance, but was, next to Amber, the leading state to introduce Mughal art into Rājputānā, with the intention however not to imitate but consciously to assimilate it. During this period there were always several centres of Rājput or semi-Rājput art, at home, at the imperial court, and in the province where the rājās were stationed as governors or generals.

The disintegration of the Mughal Empire then flooded the Rājput courts with unemployed Mughal masons, painters and other craftsmen ; first during Aurangzēb's stubborn war in the Deccan, then during the break-up of the Mughal administration under Farrukhsiyar, and finally during the later years of Muhammad Shāh and the reign of Ahmad Shāh. Each wave of Mughal art was after some two decades transformed under the influence of Rājput ideals, but the later Rājput style could emerge only when these immigrations had come to an end with the disappearance of the Mughal Empire. During this phase Bīkānēr was again thrown back into a provincial position. It accepted Mughal influence more quickly than Jaipur or Jodhpur, and assimilated it earlier. It had little direct share in the last, overelaborate phases of Mughal art, though it adopted part of them via Jaipur. Later it was strongly influenced by Jodhpur. However, the last phase of Bīkānēri art, about the beginning of the 19th century, reveals a considerable independence and a reliance on older local art forms.

But if Rājput art was so much indebted to other styles, Sāsānian, Mediaeval Hindu, Jain-Gujarātī, Central Indian-Muslim and Mughal, with what justification and in what sense may we regard it as an individual national style ? The reply is that Rājput art, though accepting all those elements from outside, has always interpreted them independently and in its own spirit, selecting, changing, modifying and intensifying until they could serve the expression of an individual and, through all variations, fundamentally identical ideal of life and of beauty : a summary, flowing treatment of outline, a simplification of plastic and colour surfaces, a strong rhythmic sense, a lack of sensuality, a romantic exaltation of life, love and adventure, a spirituality not hating this world, but sublimating it. On the one hand this represents the positive mentality of a young, and exuberant nation. On the other it occupies an intermediate position between Hindu and Irānian art. For all these reasons it stands nearer to the mentality of Europe than any other form of Indian culture. The parallels between Rājput and Mediaeval European art and civilization are many, and the European art lover can approach Rājput art best from the parallel phases of the " late Romanesque " and " early Gothic," especially in Southern France, Italy and Catalonia.

Thus within the cultural sphere the Rājput states occupy the same position as in political history, that of a frontier march of Indian civilization on the borders of the Irānian world. The relations between Rājput art and the successive styles which have influenced it, might well be compared with those between Romanesque and Roman, Italian Renaissance and Antique, Northern and Italian Renaissance art. The role of antiquaries and wandering artists, irrespective of their individual creeds, has



## CONCLUSION

been the same. The immigrants brought the raw material of tradition, the apprentices and employers reshaped it. No less than those European art forms, that of the Rājputs is entitled to be treated as a national style.

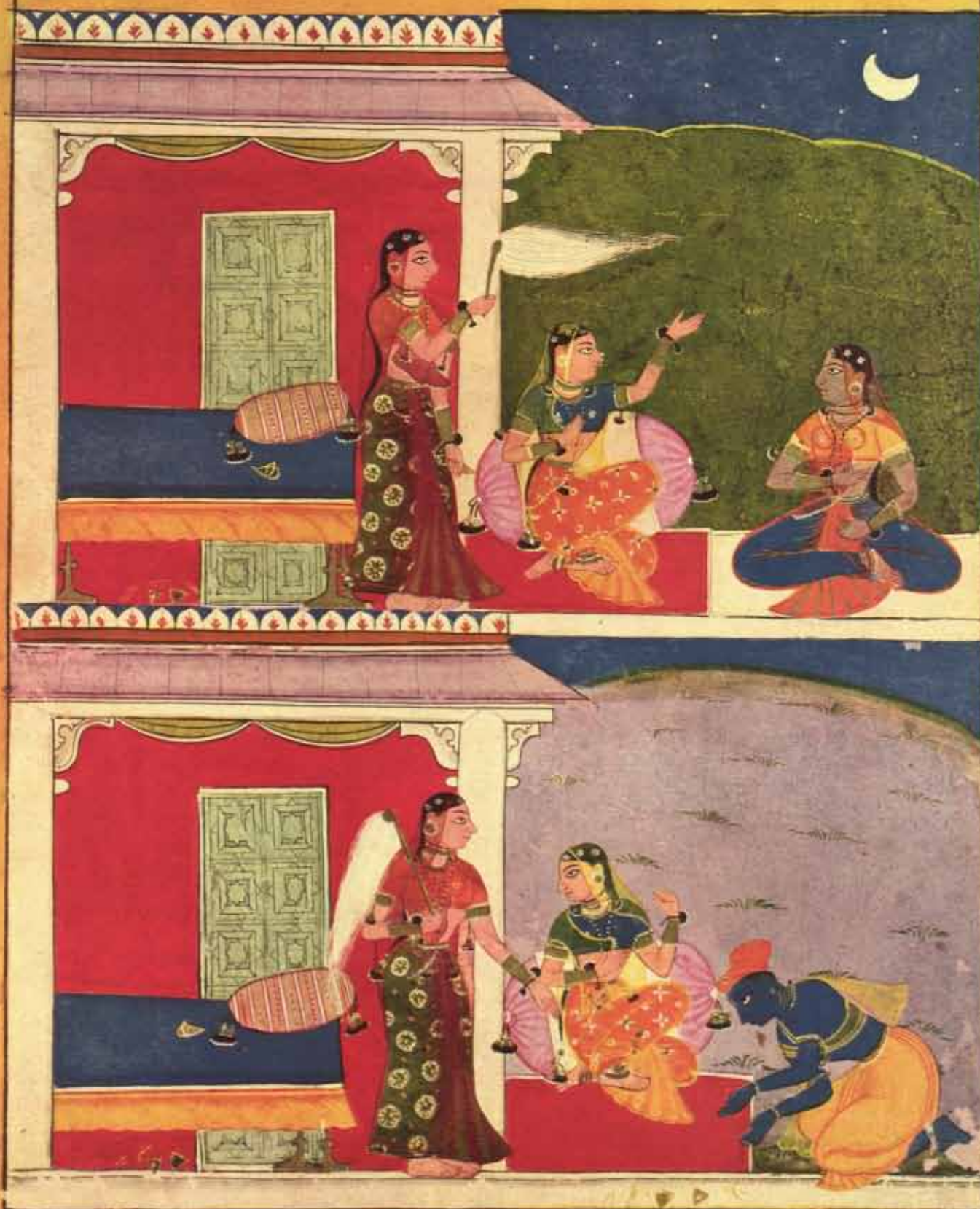
Within this Rājput style the art of Bikānēr is no more than a local school. Its importance lies not in its achievements, but in its wide scope. As no other local school it permits the historian to study the working of the great processes of artistic development in India. And to the art lover it offers a series of masterpieces of Indian art, the Gupta terracottas of the Ghaggar Valley, the Sarasvati statues from Pallū, the early Rājput sets of illustrations, Anūp Singhji's buildings, the collection of arms and paintings, the private rooms of Gaj Singhji and Sūrat Singhji in Bikānēr Fort, and the Rājput miniatures of the beginning of the last century. Less known than the treasures of Delhi, Jaipur and Jodhpur, they can well vie with them, and more than once surpass them in beauty and splendour.

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पांडुरेदुनप्रीतमत्योकरि केसवकोण्डुनमैद्वीगदीनै तेरीसषीसिषसीषी नरेकउरेष  
 हीकीसिषसीषीजुलिनीः चंदनचंदसमीरसरोजजरै दुषदेहचइसुषहीनीः मेउलरीजु  
 करीविधमोकहन्याइनि होउलरीविधकानीः॥



RADHA WITH HER CONFIDENTE AND KRISHMA AT HER FEET.

Illustration to the Rasikpriyā of Kesavadās Sanādhya Misra. Rājput Miniature (Amber), and of the 16th century. Lallgarh Palace, Bikanēr.









RAO BHOJ RATHOR.

An uncle of Rājā Rāi Singhji. Miniature (Echo of the Lodi Style?), by Nūr Muhammad, 1606  
Lallgarh Palace, Bikanēr







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1. Girl or Goddess with a Mirror. Terracotta Relief from Badopal, near Sūratgarh. Museum. About 200-400.





3

2. Goddess. Terracotta Relief from Pir Sultān, near Hanumāngarh.
3. Dāna Līlā. Terracotta Relief from Rangmahal, near Sūrātgār.
4. Umā-Maheśvara Group. Terracotta Relief from Rangmahal, near Sūrātgār.
5. Krishna lifting Mount Govardhan. Terracotta Relief from Rangmahal, near Sūrātgār.
6. Śiva Līng under a Canopy. Terracotta Relief from Badopal near Sūrātgār.

Museum. About 350-450.





4



5



6



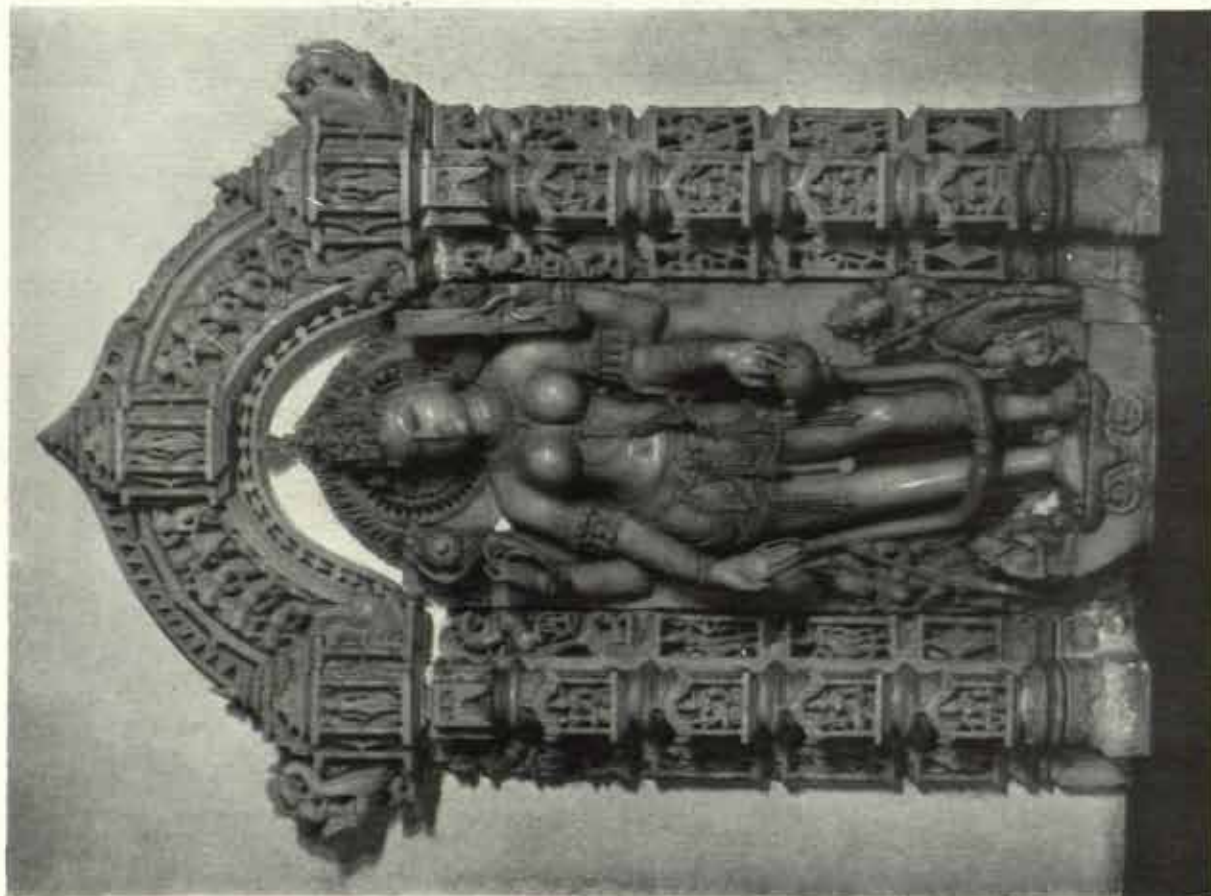


7. Dancers. Frieze from Ratangarh Fort. Museum. 11th Century.



8. Umā-Maheśvara Group from Pallū. Museum. 11th-12th Century.



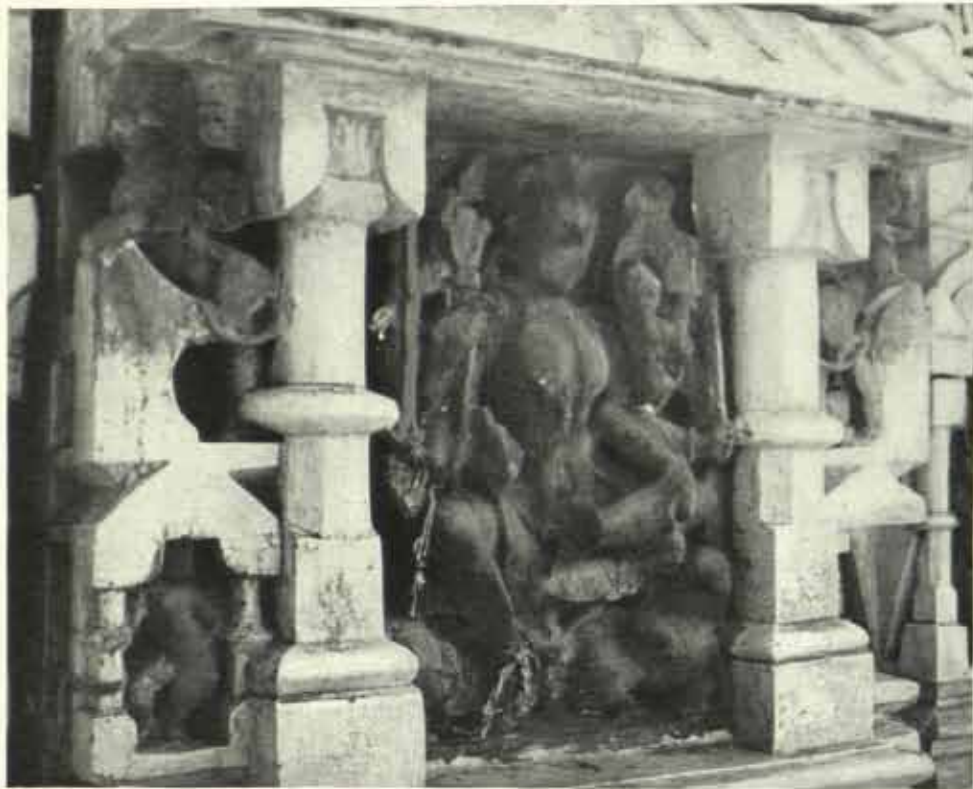


9. Sarasvati. Jain Marble Statue from Pallā, Museum. 12th Century.



10. Detail from No. 9.





11. Ambikā Image, visible between later plaster work. Susānī Temple, Morkhāna.



12. Relief and Inscription of a Lady Donor, 1172, Susānī Temple, Morkhāna.



13. Devālī (Memorial Stone) in a Nulla outside Kolāyat. 1196.





14. Devālī in a Nulla outside Kolāyat. 1447.



15. Govardhan, from Pallā. 10th-11th Century.  
Museum



16. Kīrtistambha of Kodama De, Kodamdesar, 1459.





17. Devālī of Mandala Rimanalota, uncle of Rāo Bikāji, from Savunda, 1505. Museum.



18. Devālī of Rāo Kalyan-Mall at Devikund.  
1539-71



19. Devālī at Kodamdesar, 1485.





20. Durgā Mahishamardini (Ghantali) Idol.  
Set up by Rāo Kelan of Pugal, 1419. Museum.



21. Durgā Mahishamardini Idol, Pugal.  
Said to have been brought from Jaisalmer in the 13th Century.

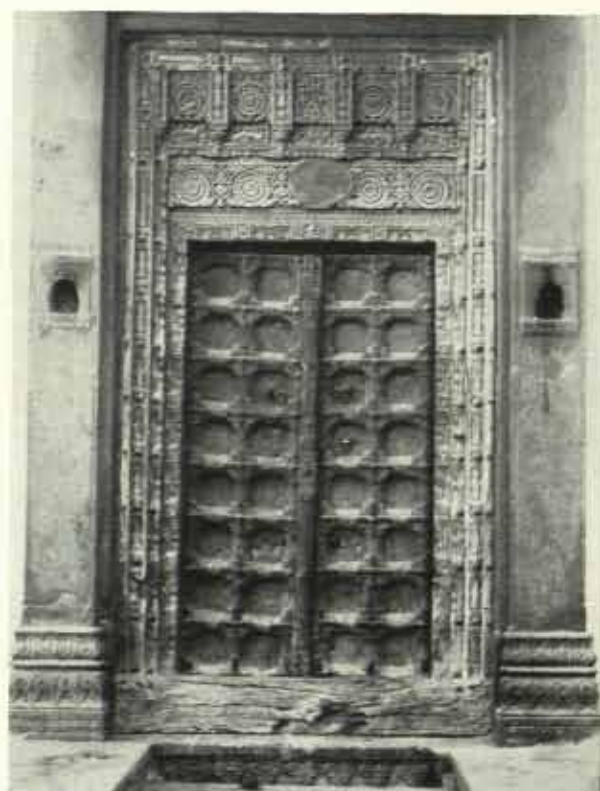




22. The Bhāndasar (Sumati-Nātha) Temple, Bikaner Town. 1514.

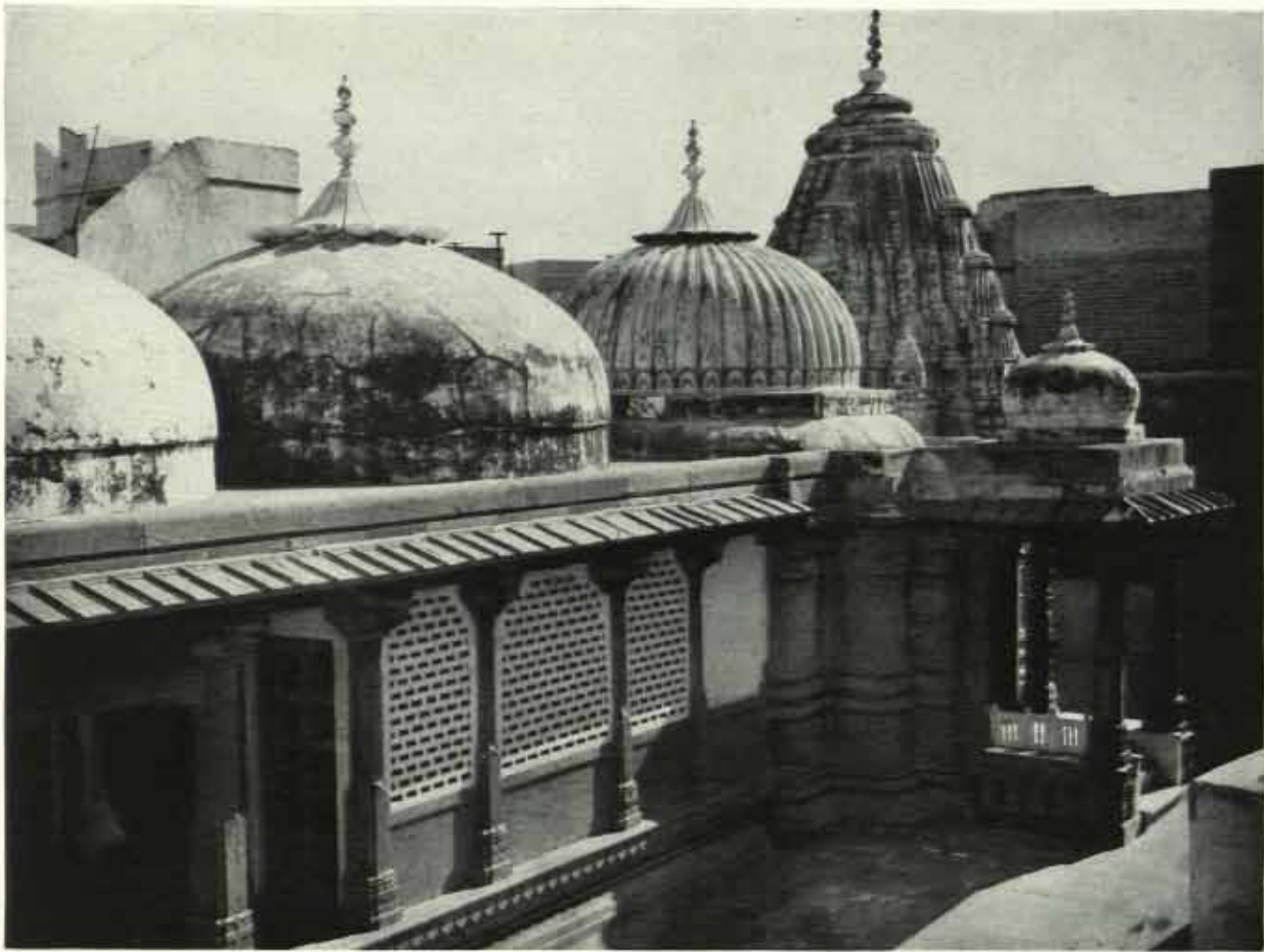


23. Porch of the Sanctuary, Neminātha Temple,  
Bikaner Town.



24. House Door in the Banthyā-kā-Chowk,  
Bikaner Town. Late 16th Century.

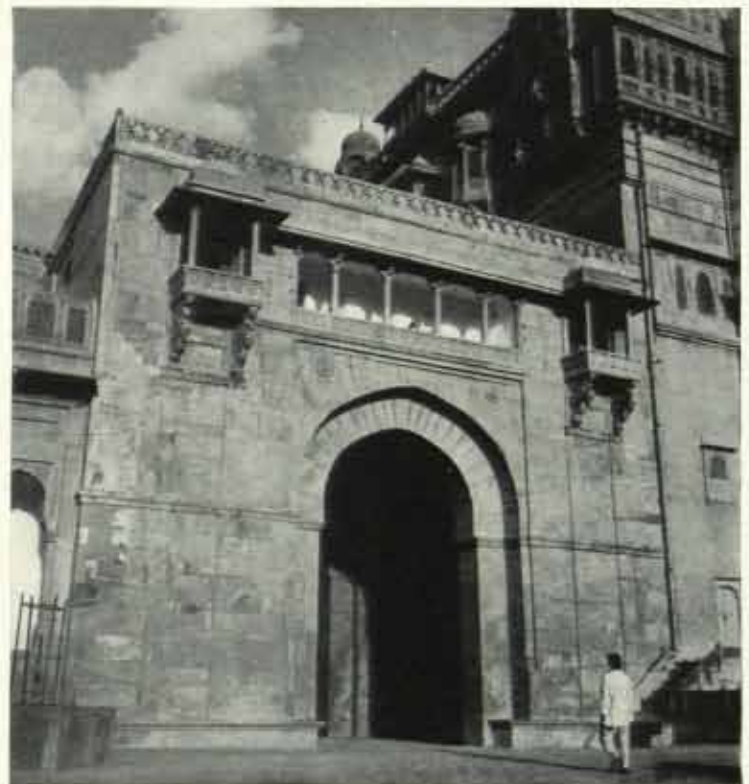




25. The Chintamani Temple, Bikaner Town. 1505, 1535, 1538, 1613-31.



26. The Shrine of the Karniji Temple at Deshnok,  
founded by Rao Jaisi (1526-1542) built 1613-31



27. Sūraj Parol (Sun Gate) from the Great Court. 1593.  
Bikaner Fort.





28. Southern Façade of Bikaner Fort Palace. In front the Sheo Bilas Garden.



29. Chhattri of Rao Kalyan-Mall (1539-1571) at Devikund.



30. Shrine of Baba Amarnath (early Mughal Tomb), Hanumangarh. 16th Century.

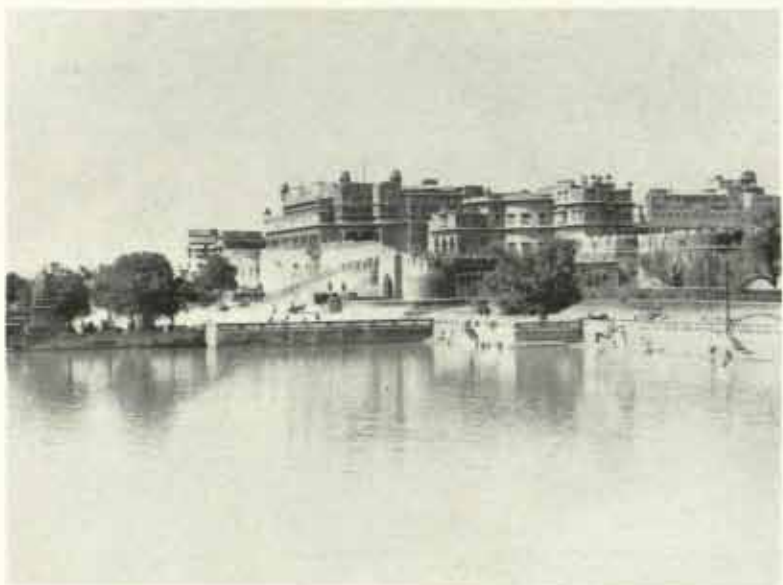




31. Northern Façade of Bikānēr Fort Palace.



32. Bīkāji-kī Tekri, the oldest Fort of Bikānēr, 1488.



33. Bikānēr Fort and its palaces, seen over the Sūr Sāgar.



34. The Funeral Shrines of the Rulers of Bikānēr at Devikund.



35. Karan Mahal (Durbār Hall). Bikānēr Fort Palace.  
ca. 1690, renovated ca. 1755.



36. "Chaubārā" of the Karan Mahal Chowk.  
Bikānēr Fort Palace 1614-1631.



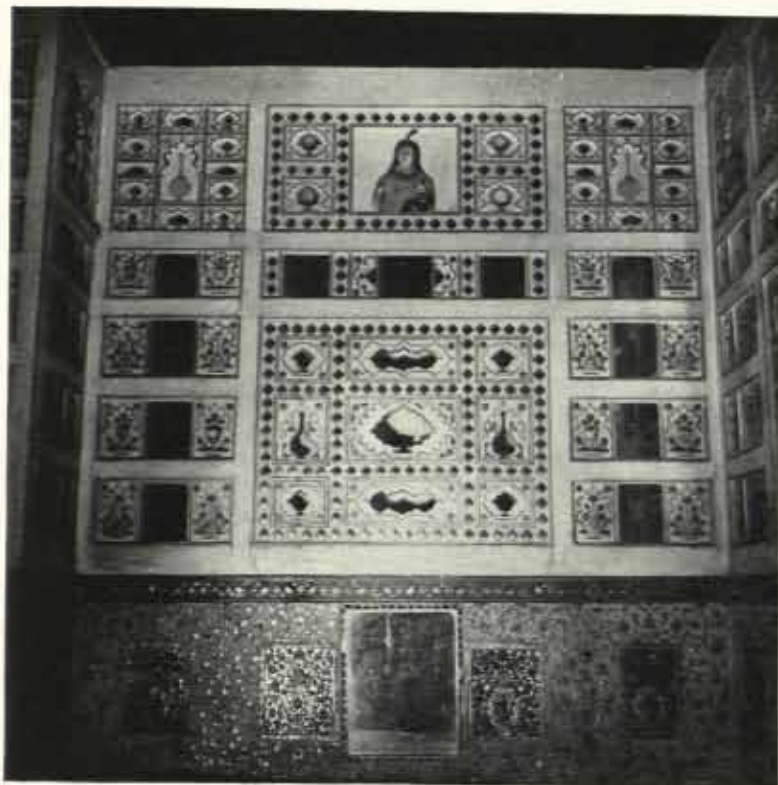


37. Panel from the Central Door of the Sujani Mahal. Bikānēr Fort Palace, 1730-1736.

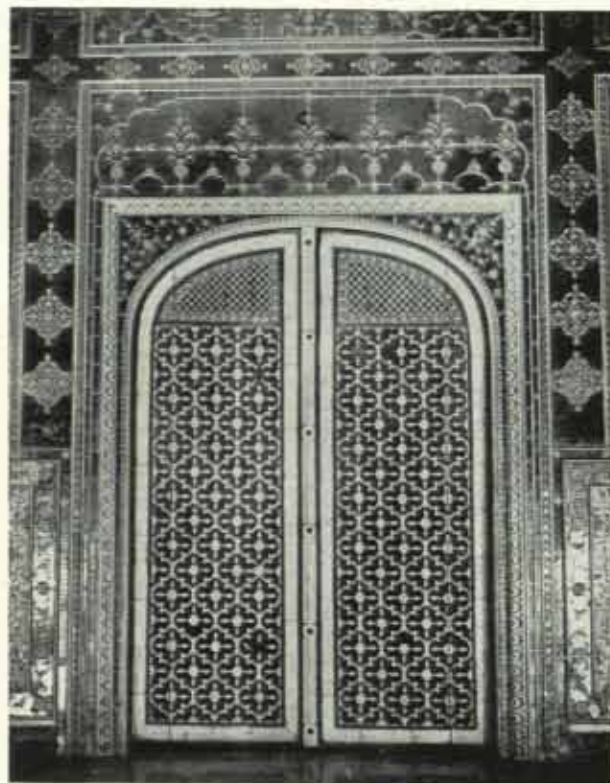


38. Lateral Door of the Sujani Mahal. Bikānēr Fort Palace. 1730-1736.

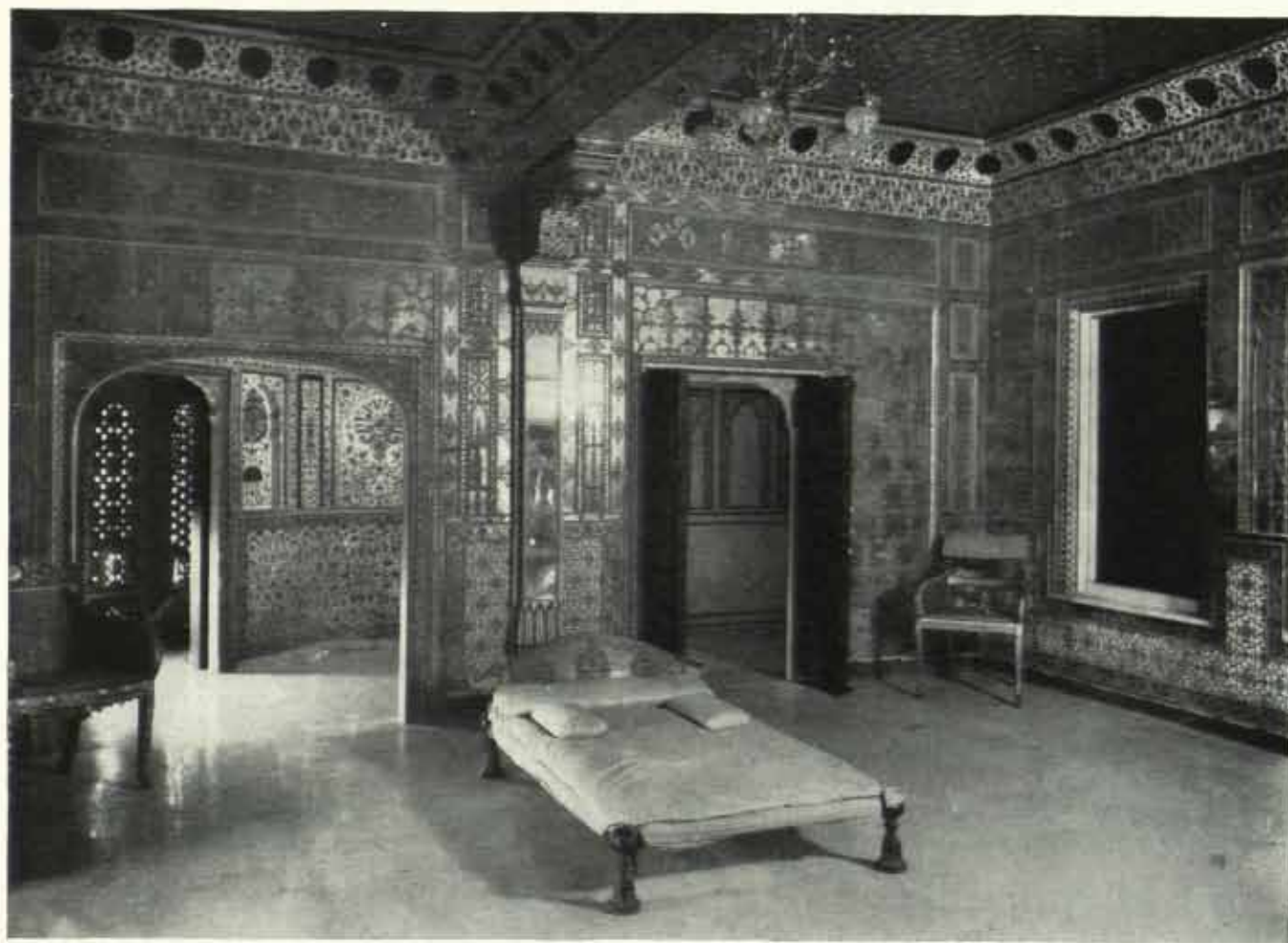




39. The Phul Mahal. Bikaner Fort Palace.  
(1719?) 1745-87.

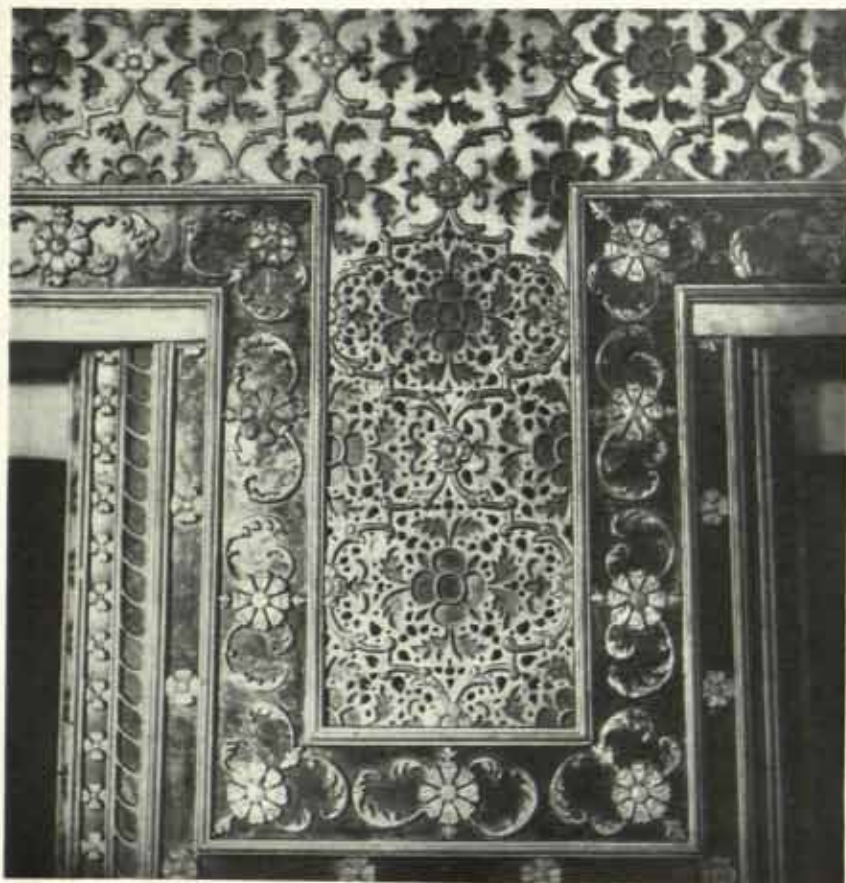


40. Sandal and Ivory Door of the Gaj Mandir.  
Bikaner Fort Palace, ca 1825-1828.



41. Shish Mahal of the Gaj Mandir. Bikaner Fort Palace. ca 1787-1828.



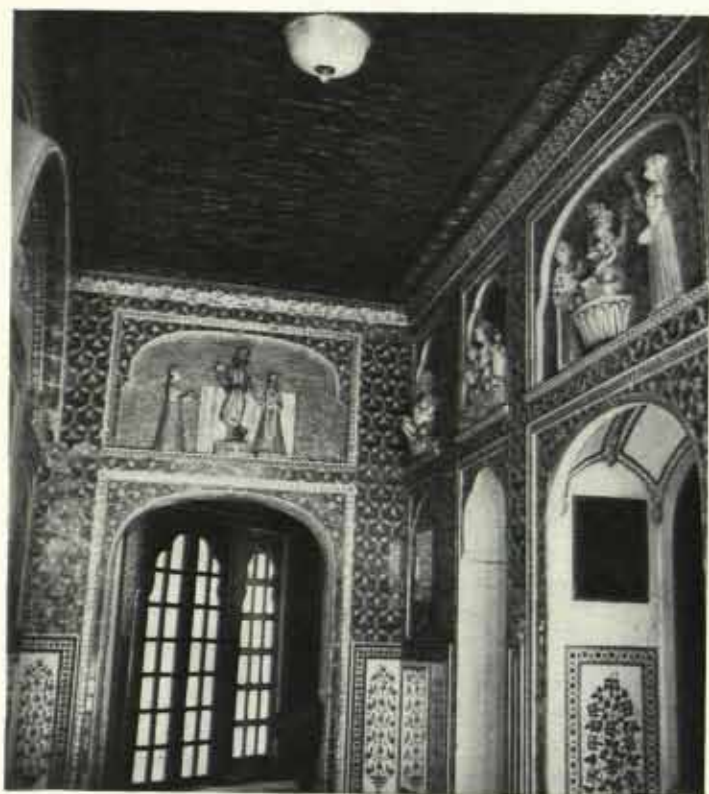


42. Detail of the Mirror and Stucco Decoration of the Gaj Mandir, Bikānēr Fort Palace.

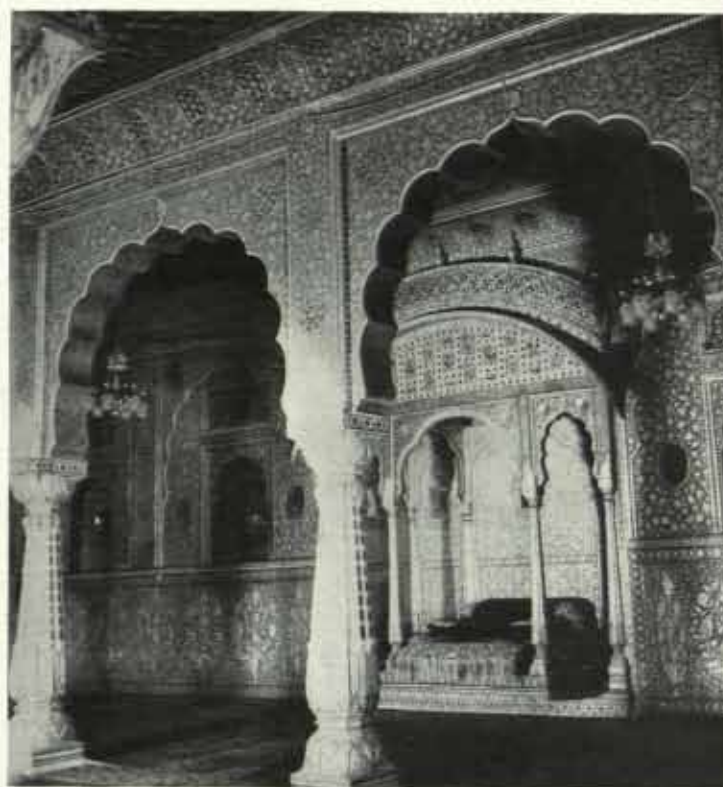


43. Rādhā-Krishna Stucco Sculptures in the " Sāl " of the Phūl Mahal, Bikānēr Fort Palace.

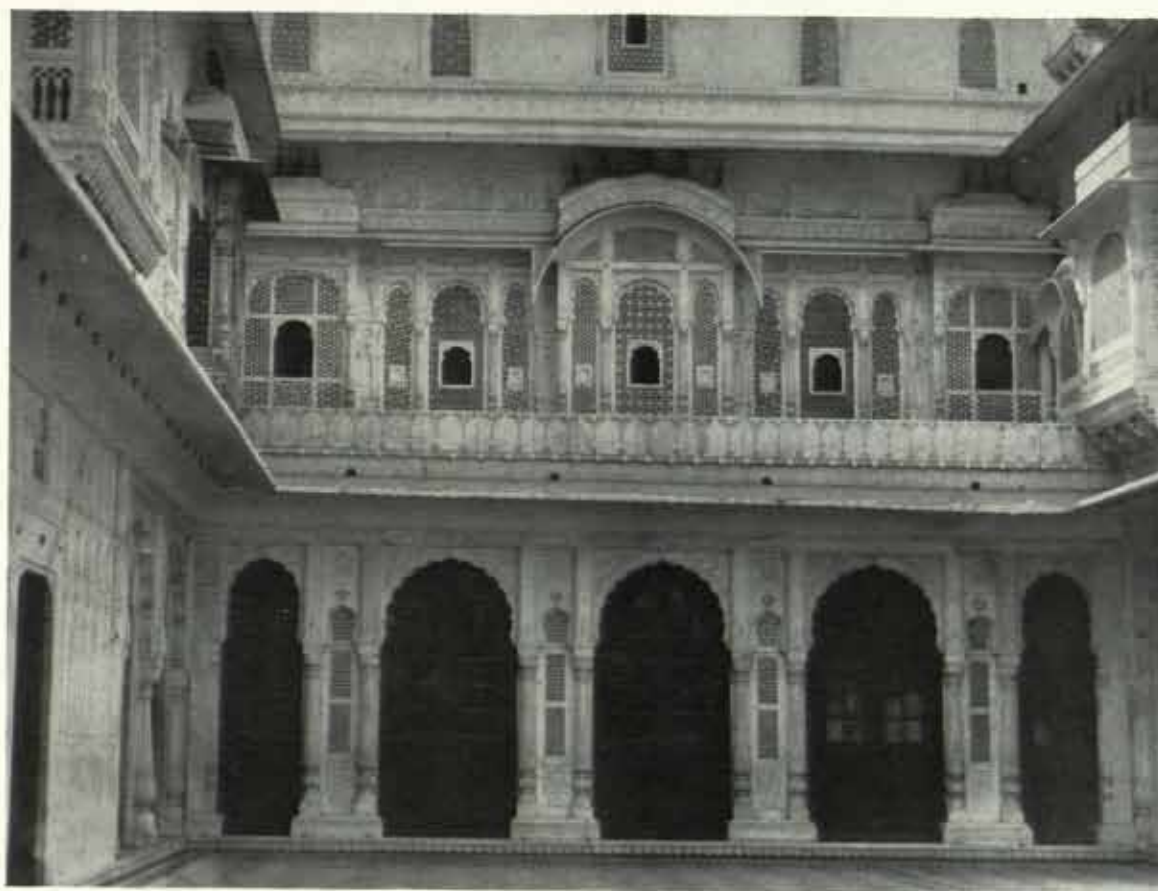




44. The "Sāl" of the Phūl Mahal with stucco groups of Rādhā-Krishna, Gaṇeśa, Śiva and Pārvatī, and Lakshmi. Bikanēr Fort Palace. About 1745-1787, decorated ca 1828-1851.



45. Interior of the Anūp Mahal. Bikanēr Fort Palace. Built about 1690, decorated 1787-1828.

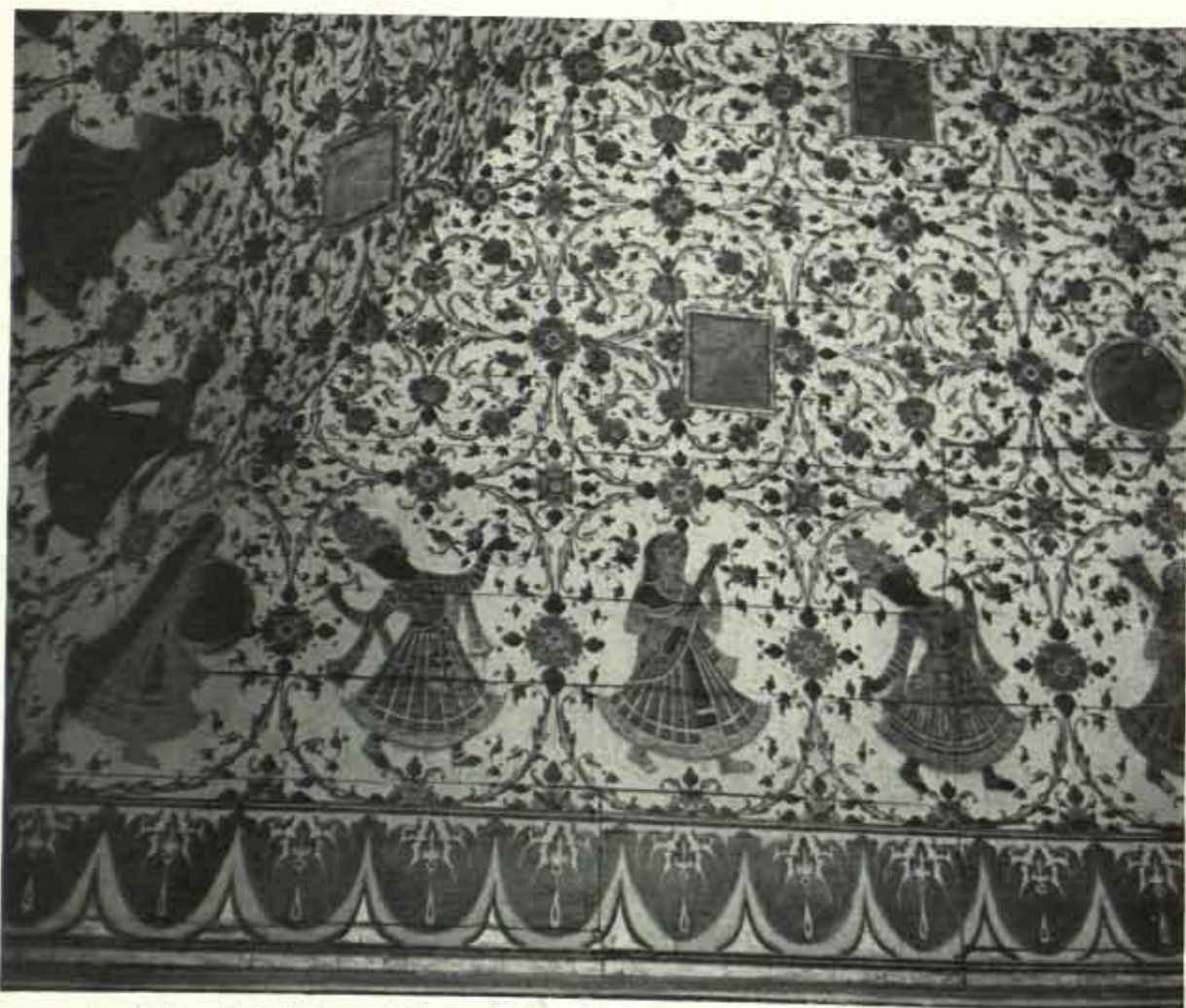


46. Front of Anūp Mahal and Rang Mahal (upper floor). Bikanēr Fort Palace. 1787-1828.



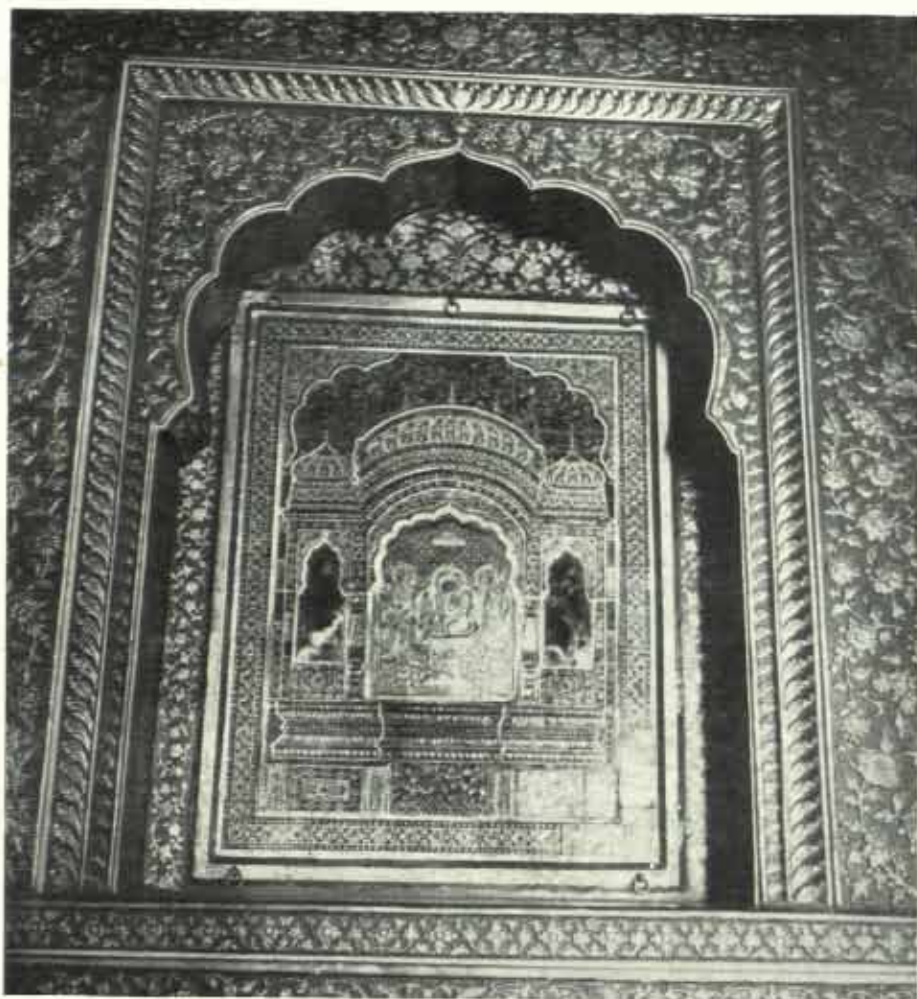


47. Gold Embroidered Pankhā (Fan) in the Chhattar Mahal, Bikanēr Fort Palace, 1820.



48. Ceiling of the Chhattar Mahal, with Ras Līlā Paintings. Bikanēr Fort Palace, ca 1872-87.





49. Wall Niche in Gilt Stucco and Jaipur Glass Mosaic Picture in the Anup Mahal, Bikaner Fort Palace. About 1787-1828 and 1850.



50. Vishnu-Narayana. Relief in gilt stucco on a pilaster in the Anup Mahal, Bikaner Fort Palace. About 1787-1828.





51. Rasik Śiromani Temple, Bikaner Town. Late 19th Century.



52. Gangā Nivās. Bikaner Fort Palace. About 1872-1887.





53. Chattri of Mahārāja Anūp Singh (1674-1698) at Devikund.

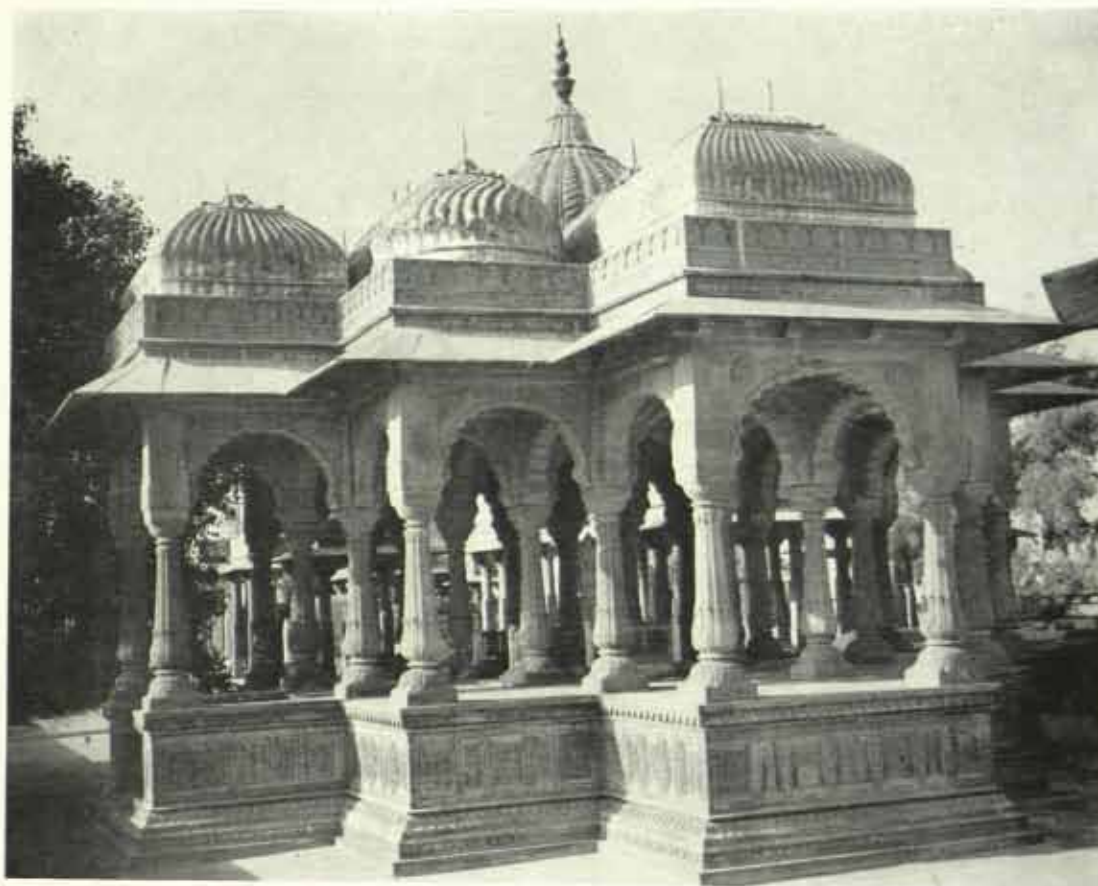


54. Ras Lila Relief in the Central Ceiling of Mahārāja Anūp Singh's Chattri at Devikund.



55. Ceiling with Ras Lila Reliefs in the Chhattri Purohit Jagrānji, Bikānēr Fort, 1740.





56. Chhattri of Mahārāja Sujan Singh (1700-1736) at Devikund.

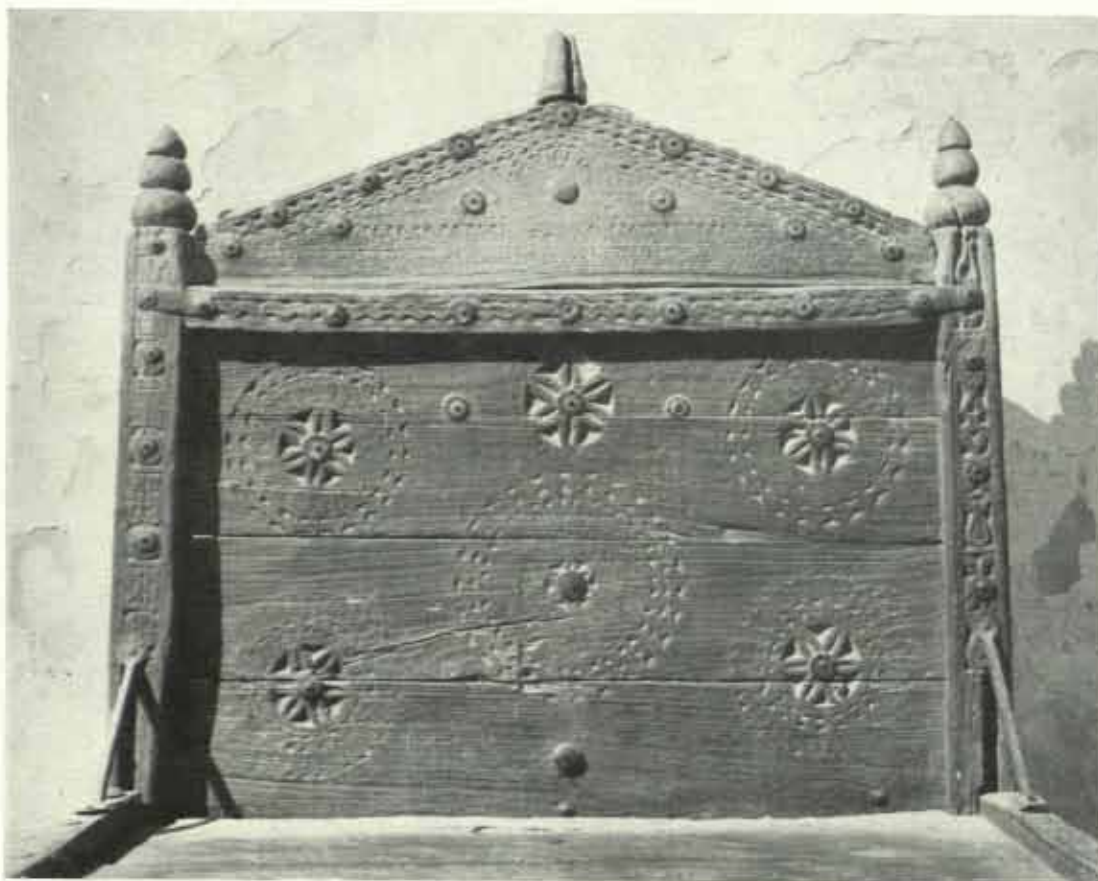


57. Memorial Stone of Rāja Karan Singh (1631-1674) at Devikund. "Improved" marble replica early 19th Century.



58. Decoration of the Chhattri of Mahārāja Gaj Singh (1745-1787) at Devikund.





59. The "Ghazni Throne" of the Rājas of Pugal, said to have been brought from Afghanistan, and thus the oldest piece of Indian furniture. Pugal Palace,

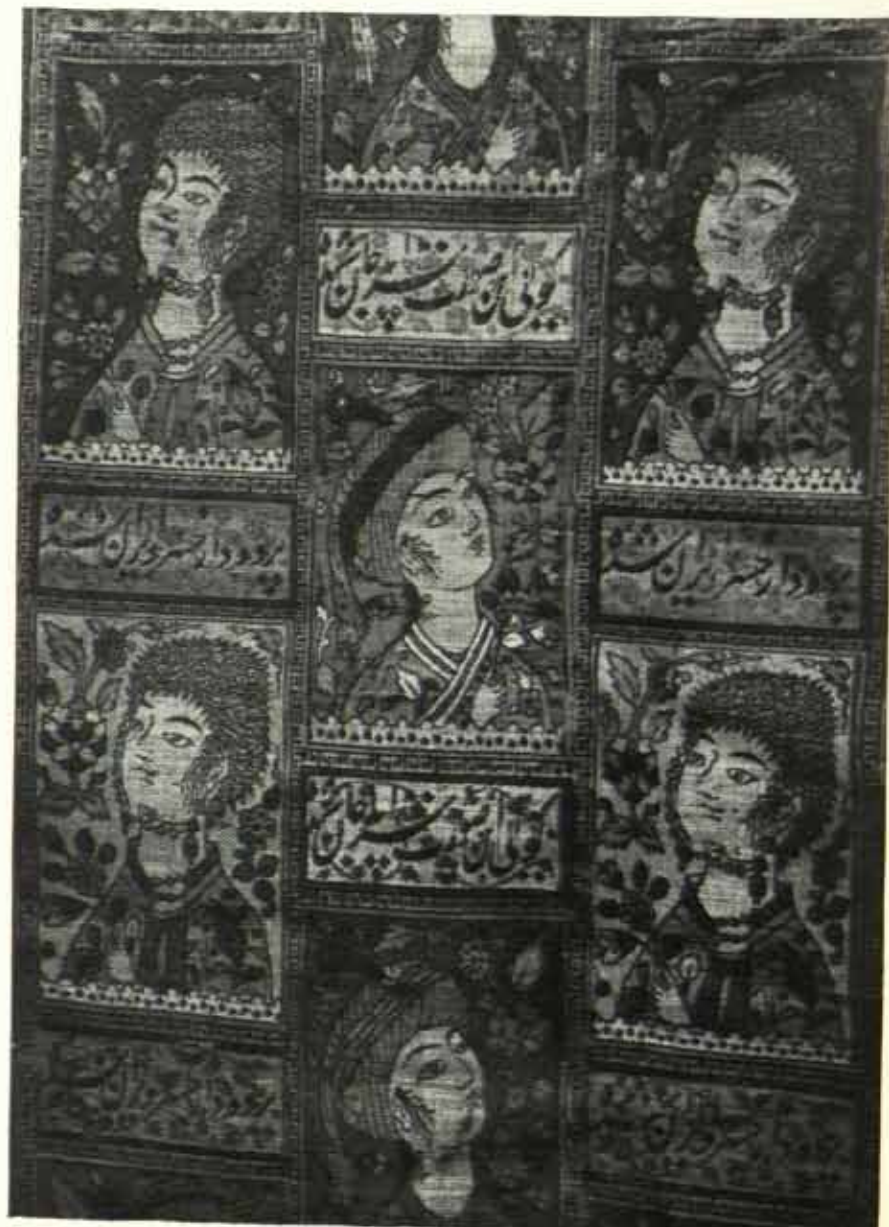


60. The "Kanauj Throne," brought by Rāo Bīkā from Jodhpur 1490 and said to have been saved by Rāo Sīhājī from Kanauj 1193. 15th Century Rāi Nivās. Bīkānēr Fort.



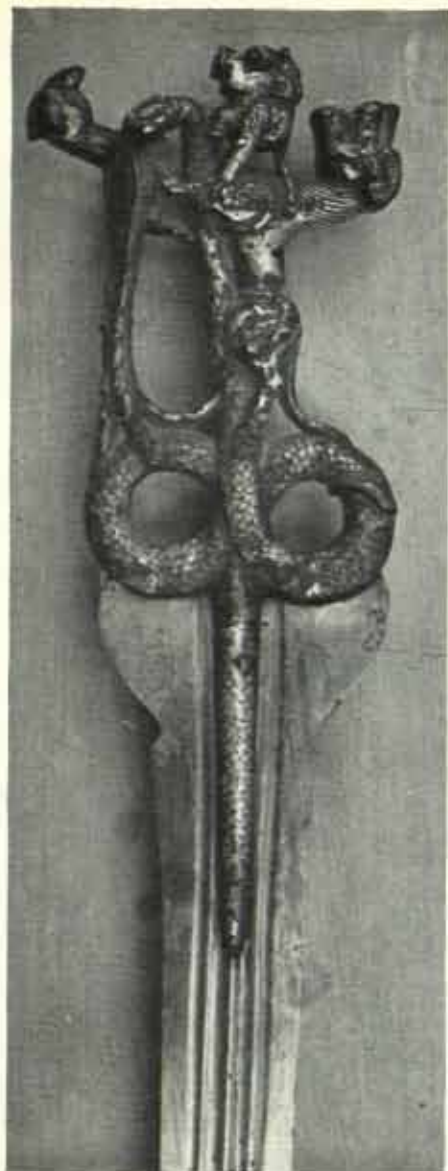


61. Silver Doors of the Karniji Shrine, Deshnoke.

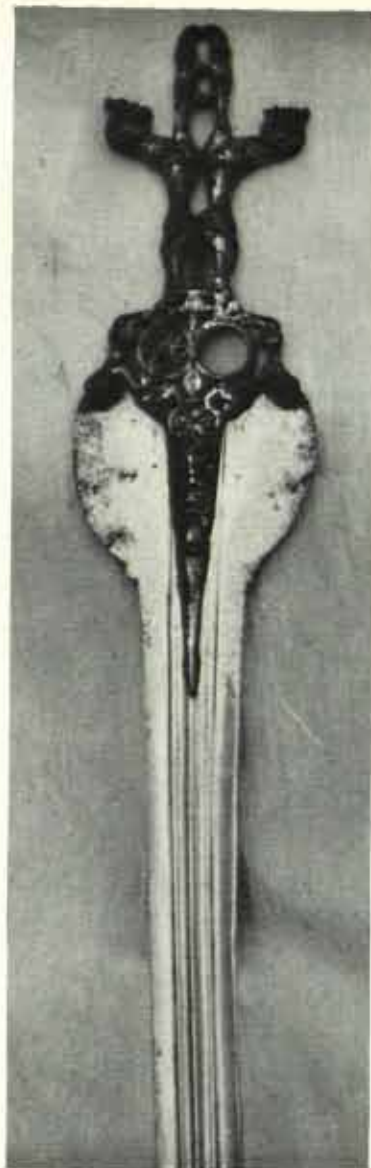


62. Detail of the Fugal : Woven silk pictures of a Persian boy and girl in the court costume of ca. 1570-1580, and Persian verses.





63



64



65



66

63-65. Hilt of South Indian Swords from Adoni.

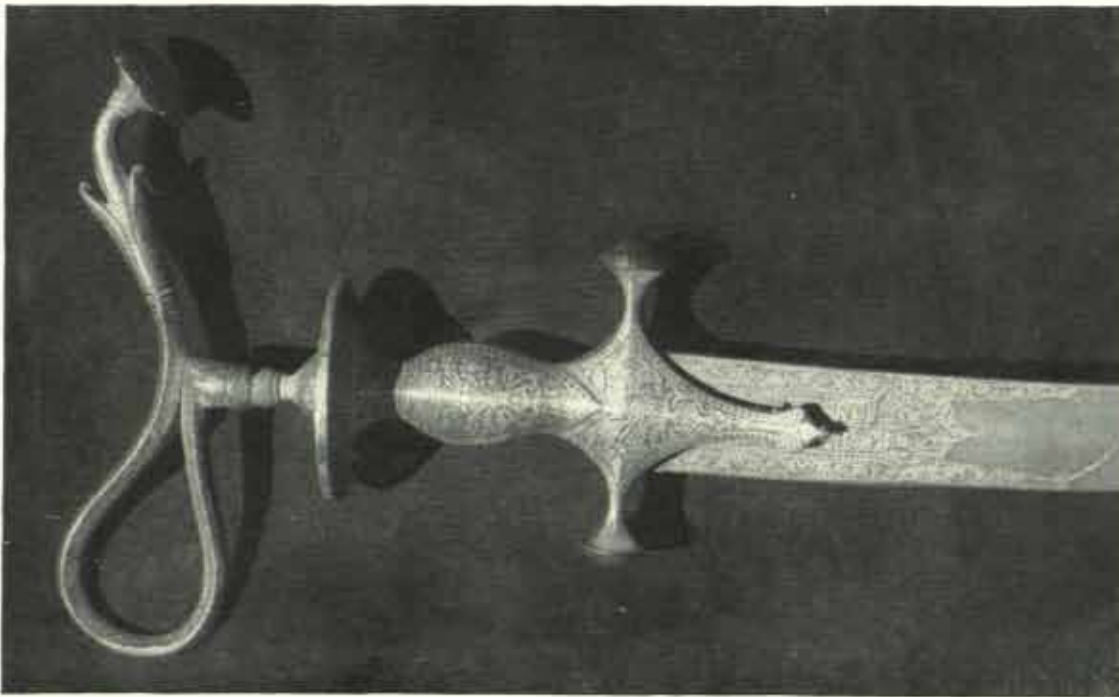
From the booty of Mahārāja Anūp Singhji, late 17th Century. Fort Armoury.

66. Kattrār. Rājput Dagger, 17th Century. Fort Armoury.





67



68



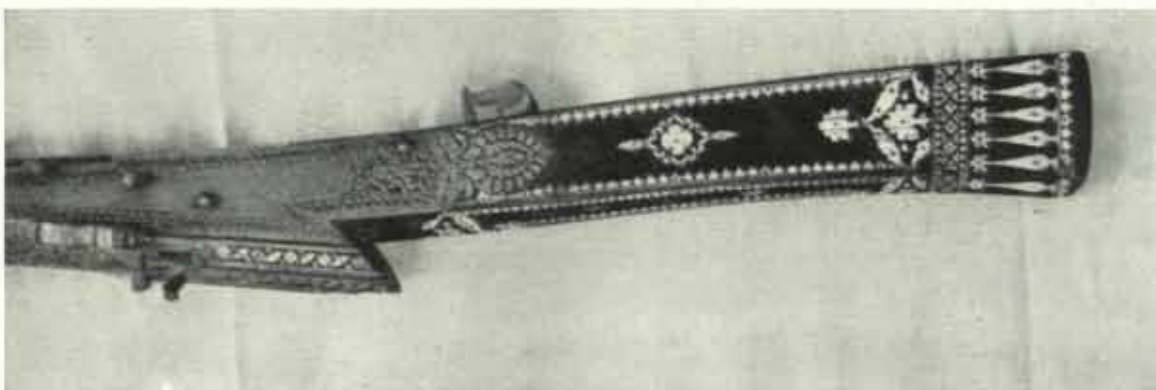
69

67. Hilt of a Mughal Sabre (Talwār), with silver niello ("Bidri") decoration. Middle 17th Century. Fort Armoury.
68. Hilt of a Mughal Sabre (Talwār), with hand support and gold niello decoration. End of the 18th Century. Fort Armoury.
69. Hilt of a Deccani Rājpūt Sabre (Talwār), 17th Century. Museum.





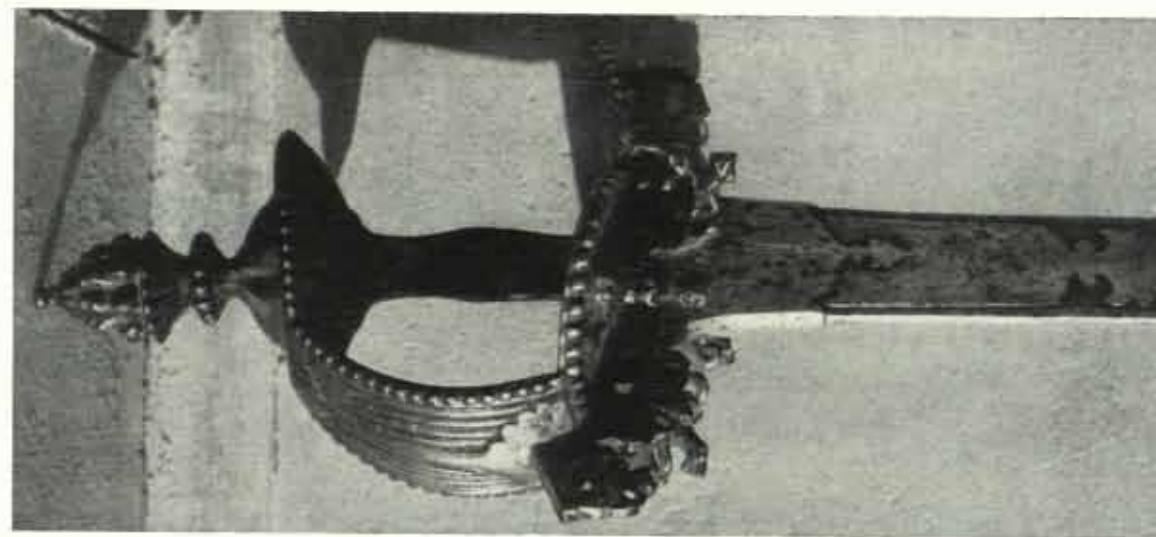
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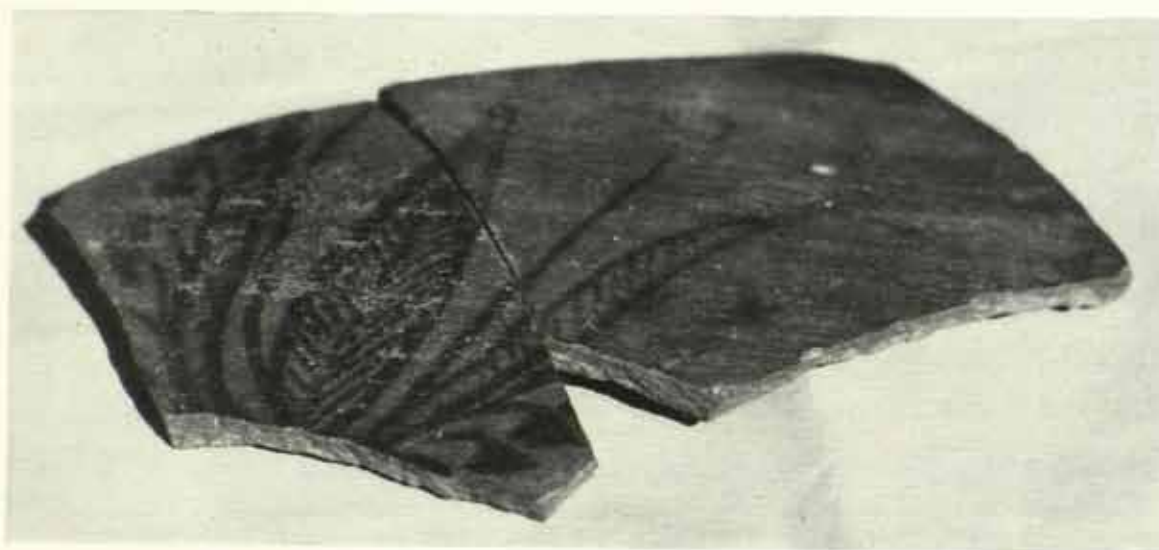
72



73

70. Sword (Karti Talwār) with Devanāgarī Inscription, inlaid with gold wire; 18th Century. Fort Armoury.
71. Rifle Butt inlaid with Ivory. Fort Armoury.
72. Sword of the Emperor Akbar, with a Malayan hilt. Museum.
73. Hilt of a Deccanī (?) Sword, with miniature lion figures under the basket, 17th Century. Museum.



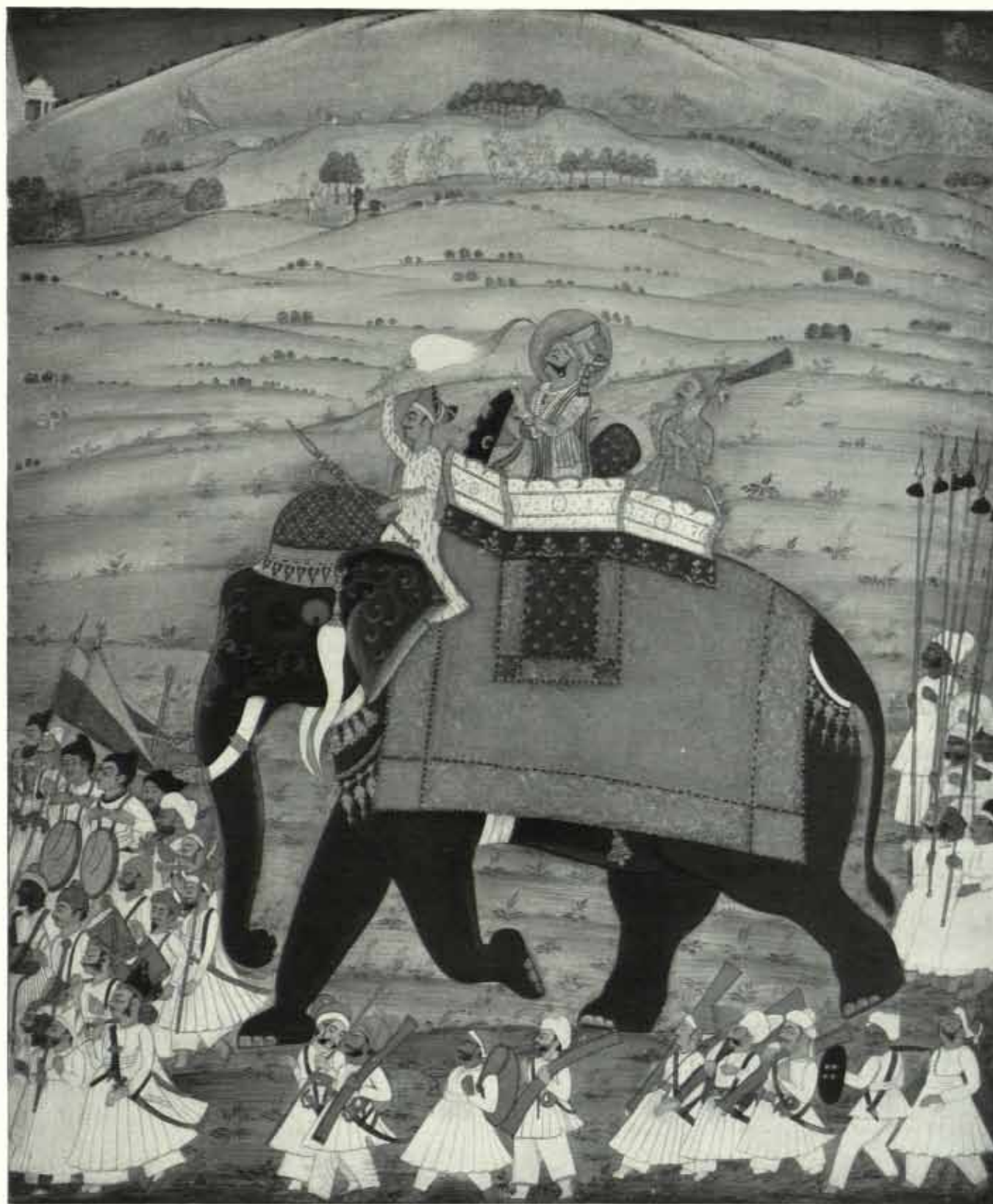


74. Yaudheya Pottery Sherd from Manak Theri, pre-Christian time.



75. Sati Memorials at the Daulat Gate, Bikānēr Fort.





76. Mahārāja Gaj Singh returning from the Bhatti campaign, 1773. Lallgarh Palace.





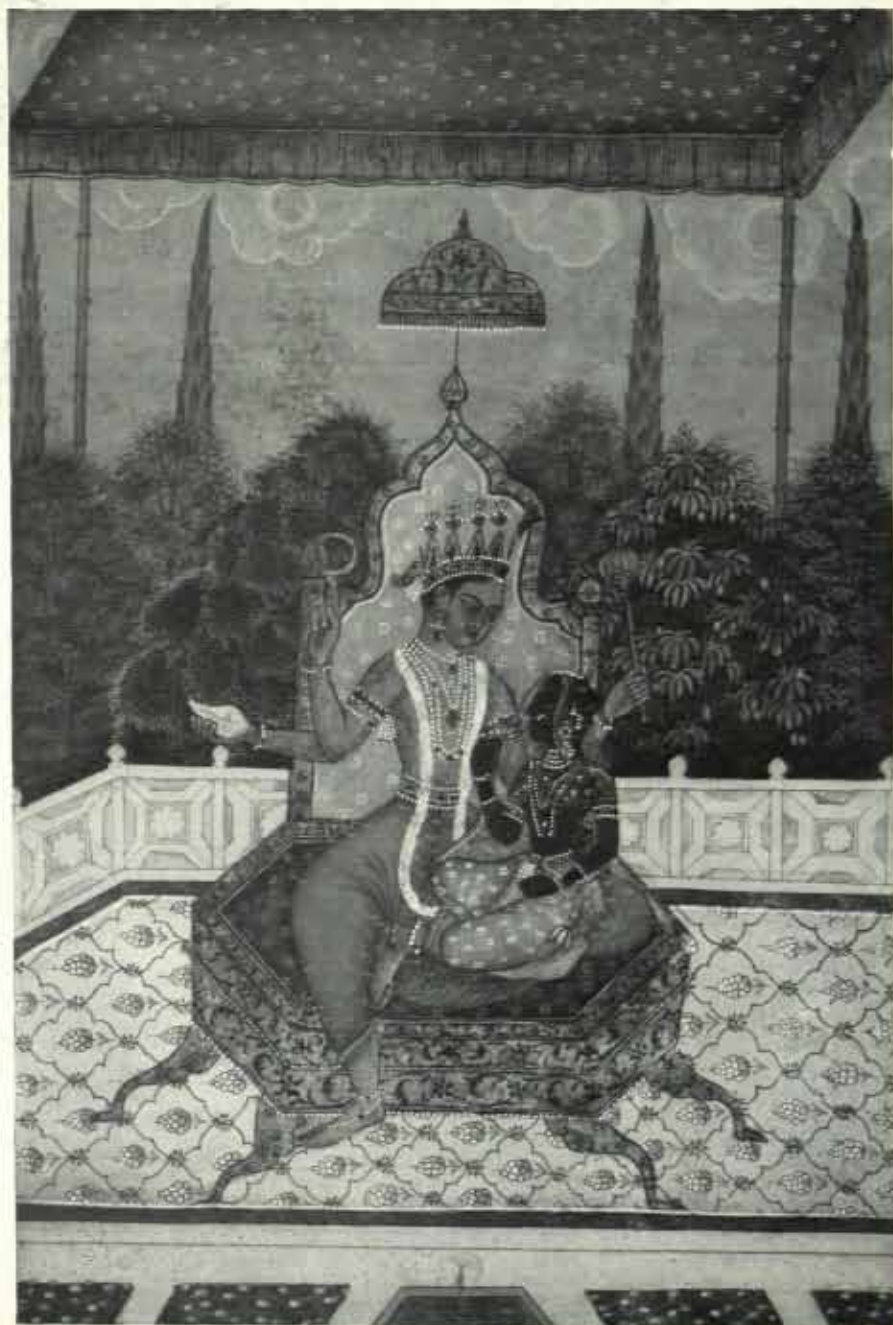
77. Mahārāja Anūp Singh on the lion-hunt with his three brothers Keśrī Singh, Mohan Singh and Pādam Singh.  
Mughal Miniature by Rashid. 1693. Lallgarh Palace.





78. Illustration to the *Rasikpriyā* : Krishna secretly observing Rādhā's Toilet.  
Miniature of the Anūp Singh School by Ustād Rukn-ud-Dīn.  
1684 or 1694.

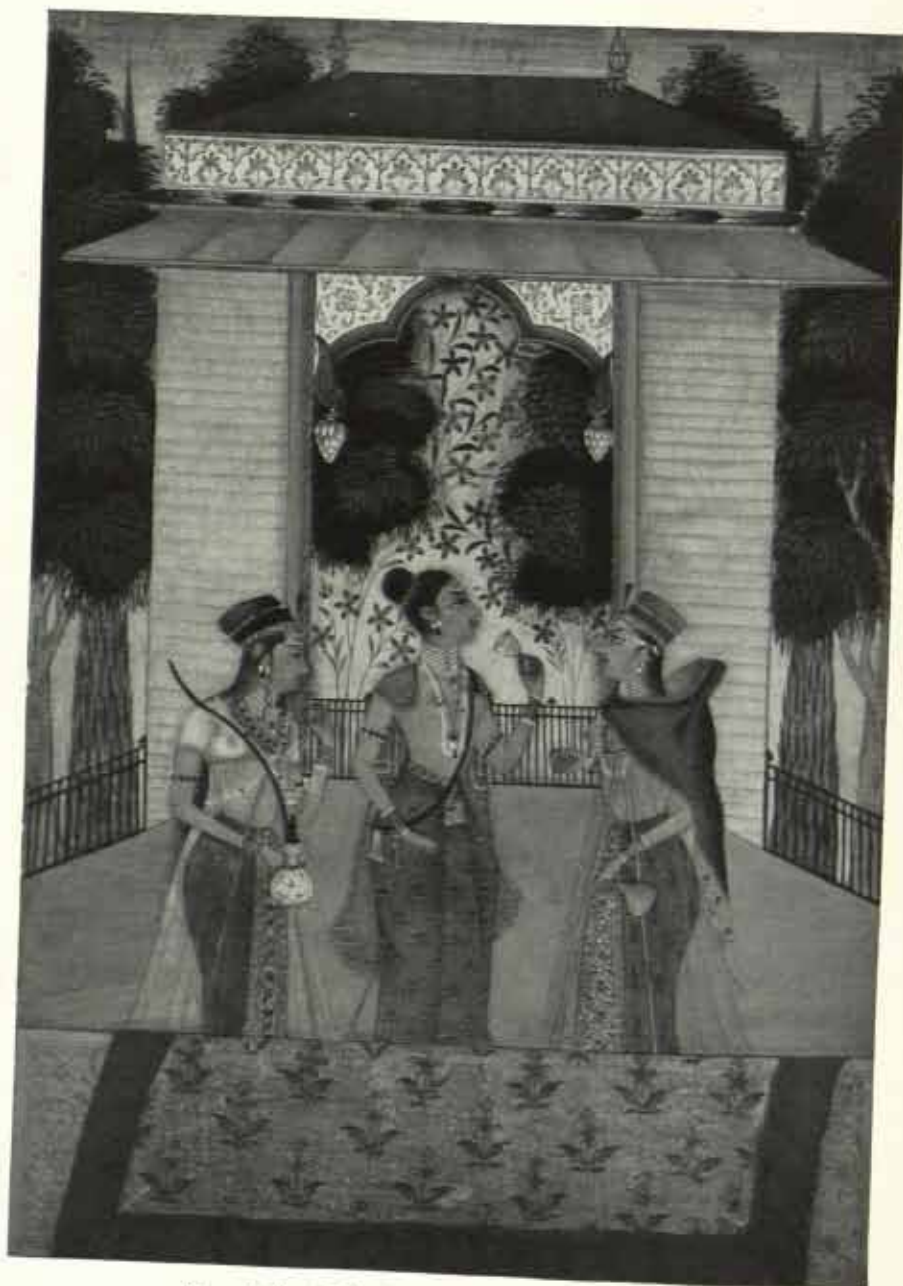
79. Vishnu and Lakshmi. Miniature by Ustād Rashid.  
Anūp Singh School. Lallgarh Palace, 1699.







80. Madhu-Mādhavi Rāgini. Mughal Miniature (Amangzeb School?)  
Executed for Karan Singhji or Anūp Singhji?  
Second half 17th century, Lallgarh Palace.



81. A Yogini in the company of Court Ladies  
Miniature 1712. Lallgarh Palace.



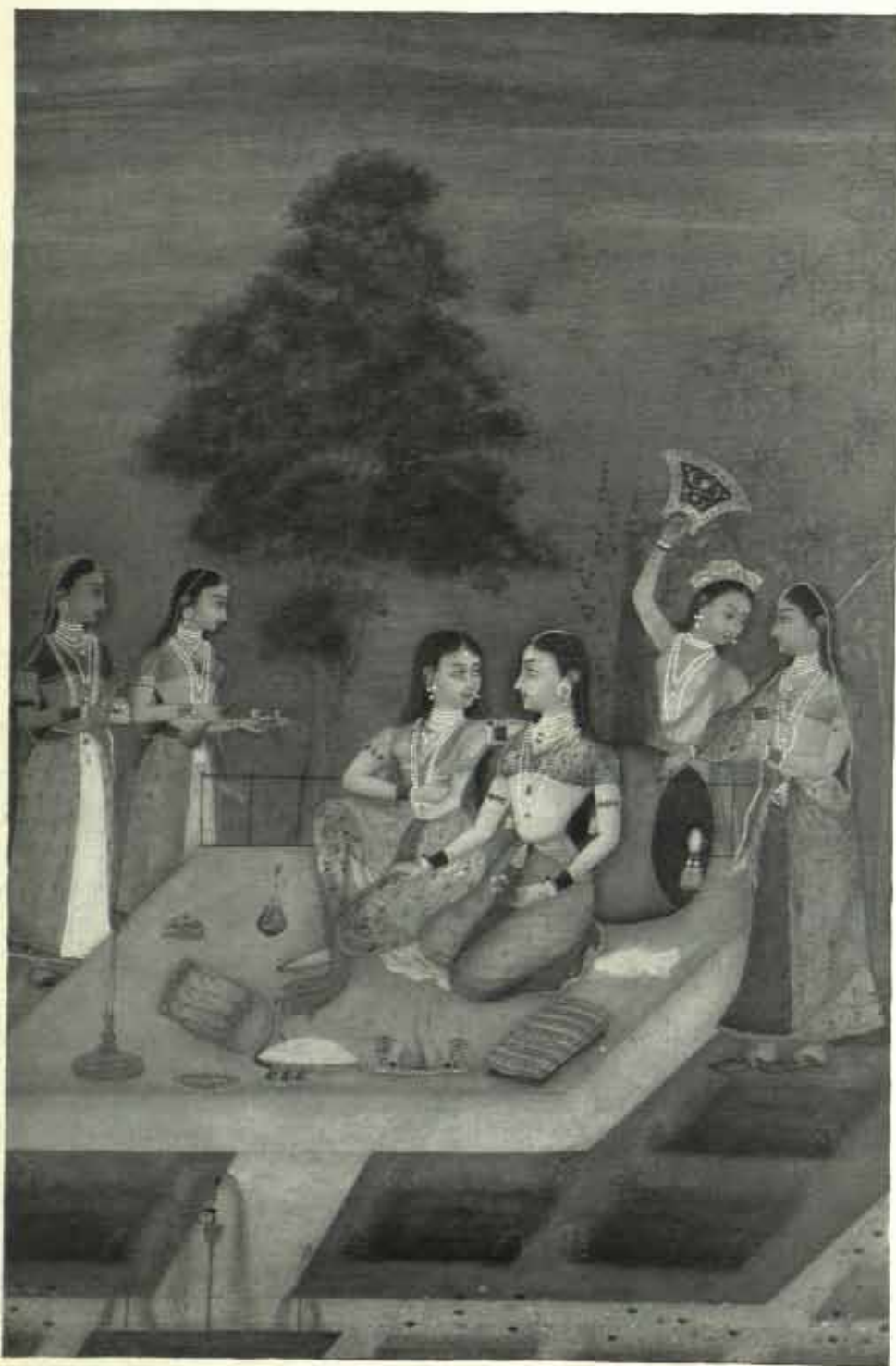
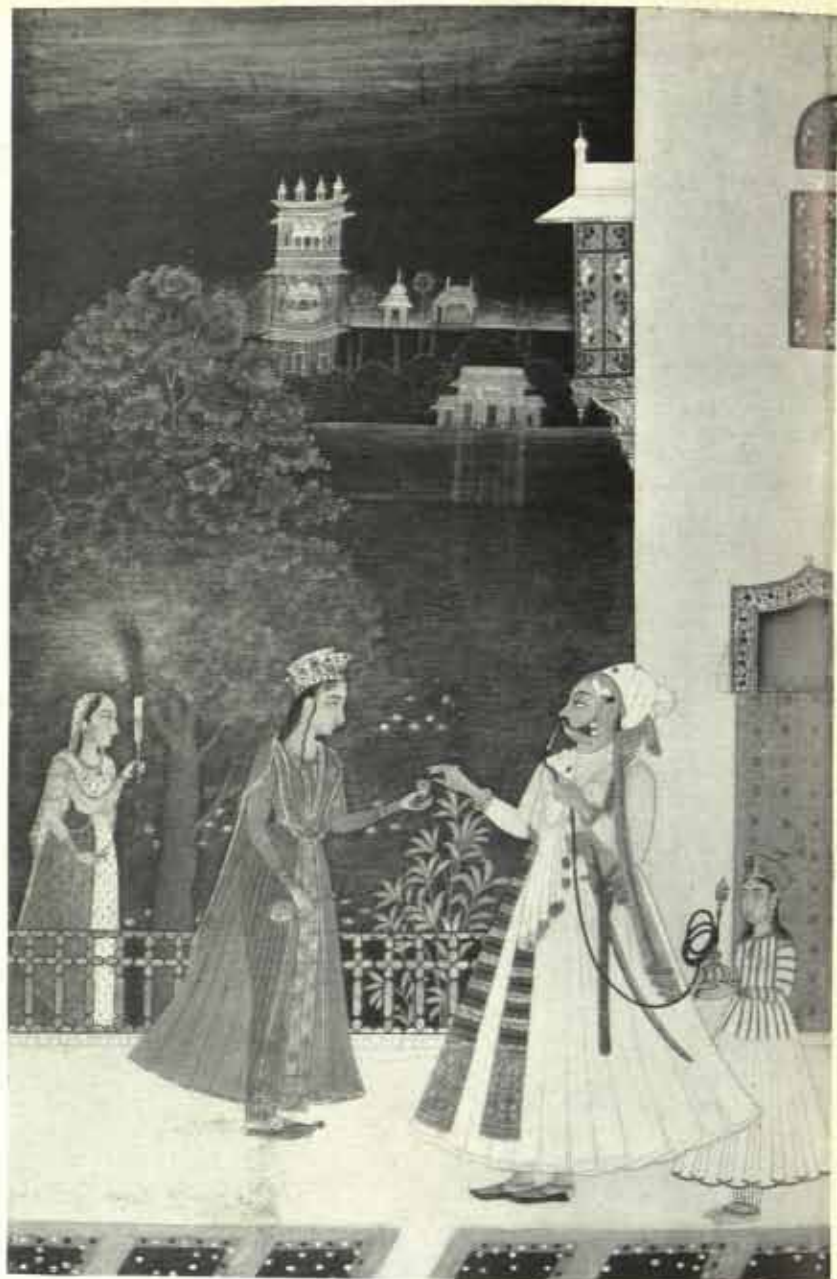


82. Mahārāja Sūrat Singh (1787-1828) in Council with Dhonkal Singh, pretender to the throne of Jodhpur.

Miniature by Ustād Kāsim, 1809. Lallgarh Palace.

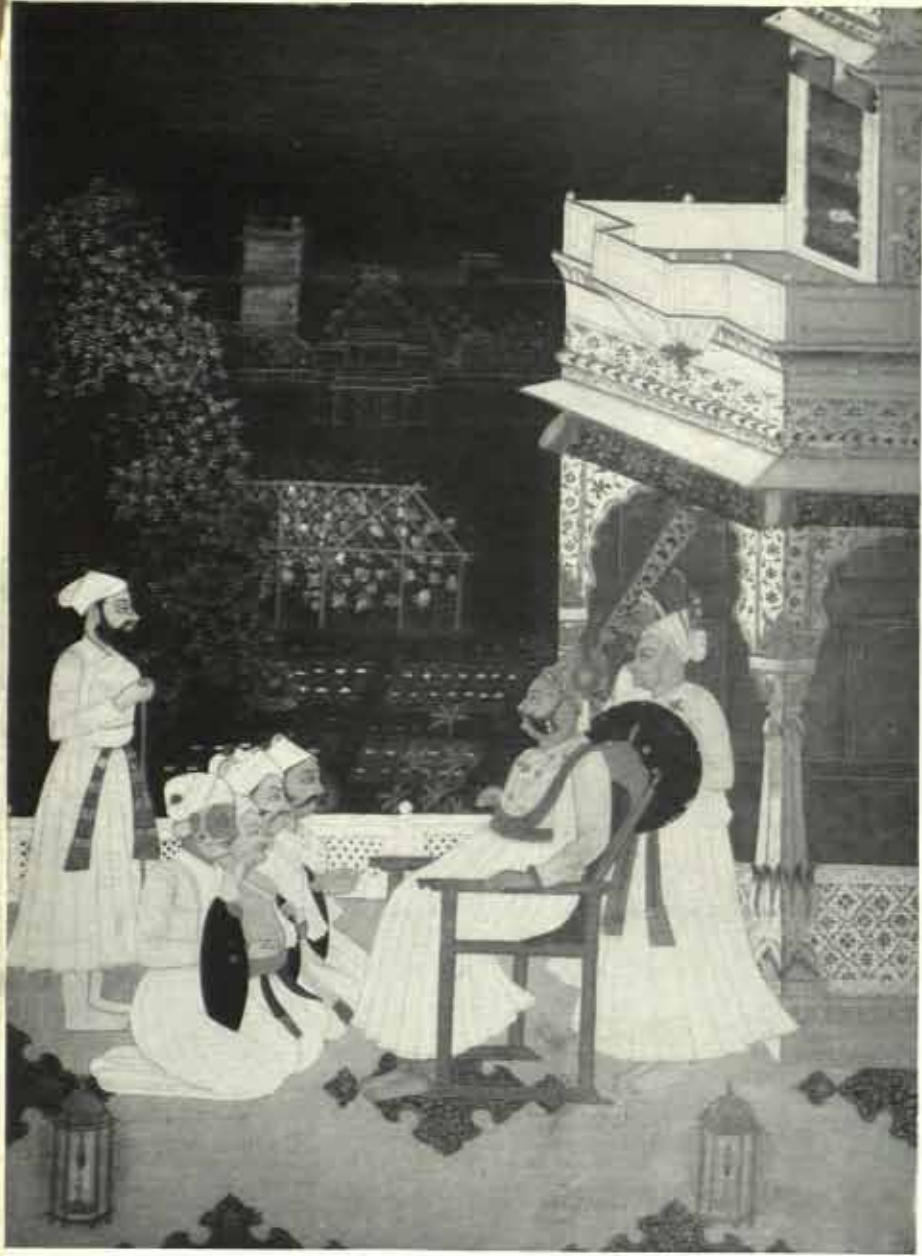


84. Mahārāja Sujan Singh (1700-1736), with his Chief Queen, Abhei Kanwar Jaisalmaīrī (?), on the terrace of the Gaj Mandir, Bikānēr Fort. Miniature of the Sujan Singh School. 1720. Baroda State Museum.



83. Ladies' Party. Miniature of the Karan Singh School, by Ustād Hamid Rukn-ud-dīn, 1666. Lallgarh Palace.





85. Mahārāja Gaj Singh (1745-1787) in Council on the terrace  
of the Gaj Mandir in Bikānēr Fort.  
Miniature, ca 1765-70. Lallgarh Palace.



86. The Princess (daughter ?) of Mahārāja Rāj Singh (1787),  
by the son of Ustād Hamīd Ahmad. 1798-1799. Lallgarh Palace.





87. Rājah Ran Singh on Elephant.  
Mughal Painting executed under Sūrāt Singhji  
ca 1818-28. Lallgarh Palace.



88. Prince Zorāwar Singh (Mahārāja 1736-1745) on horseback.  
Miniature by Ustād Ahmad Murād, 1722.  
Lallgarh Palace.

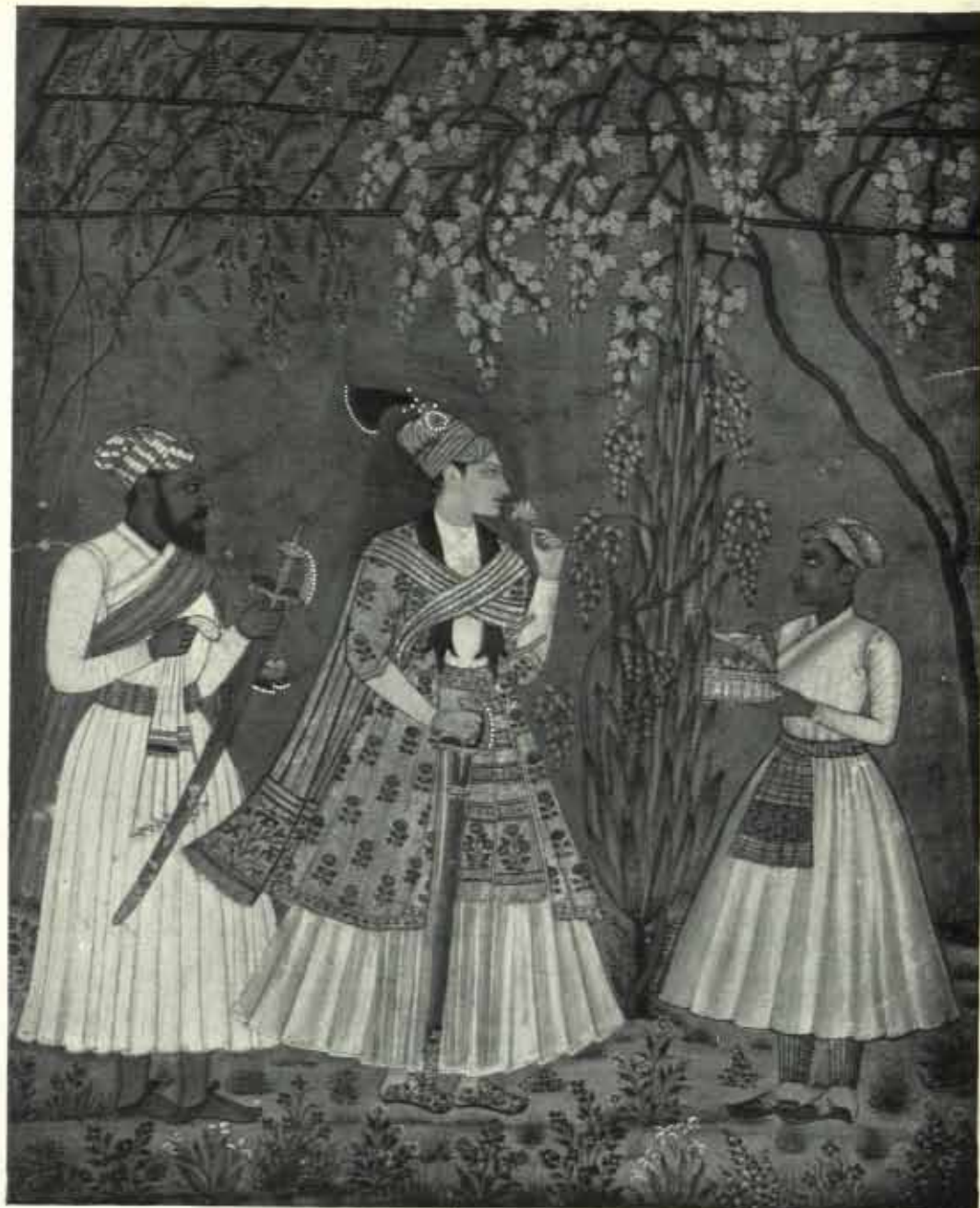


90. Portrait of the Son-in-Law

of Sultan Abū'l-Hassan Tānā Shāh of Golconda (1672-1687).

Deccanī Miniature, Golconda.

From Anūp Singh's booty of Adoni (1689) Lallgarh Palace.



89. Rāja Rāi Singh (1571-1612)

Miniature by Ustād Sāh Mahammed Abū Reso, 1785

Lallgarh Palace,





91. Illustration to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (Krishna Līlā) : Dāna-Līlā.  
Rājput Miniature, ca 1580. Lallgarh Palace.

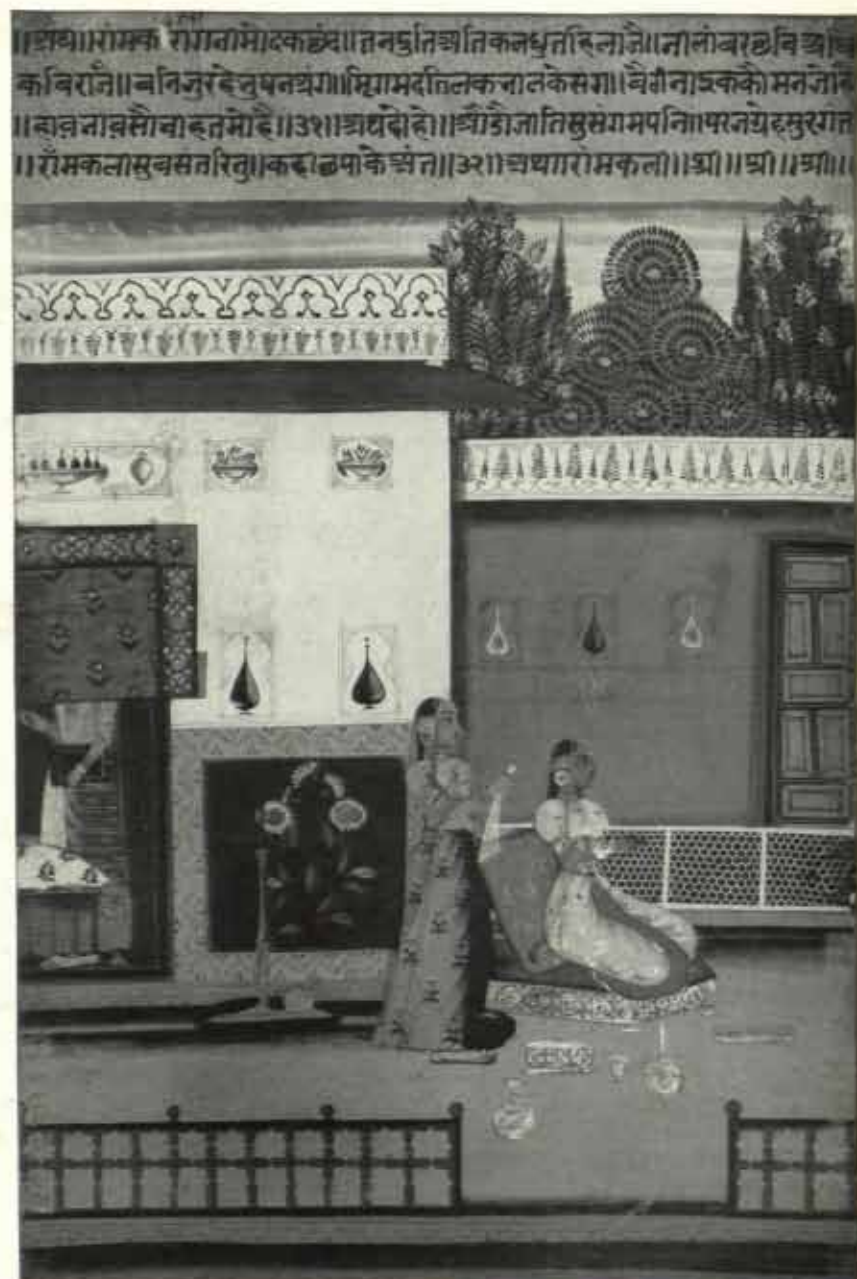


92. Yūsuf is presented by Zulaikha to the Ladies of Egypt.  
Illustration to Hamdi's Yūsuf and Zulaikha, Turkish School. Lallgarh Palace.





93. Illustration to the Rasikpriyā : The Sakhī calls Krishna to Rādhā.  
Miniature of the Anūp Singh School, by Ustād Nūr-ud-dīn, 1687.  
Lallgarh Palace.



94. Rāmkali Rāgini. From a Rāgmālā Series  
of the reign of Mahārāja Sūrat Singh, early 19th Century. Lallgarh Palace.



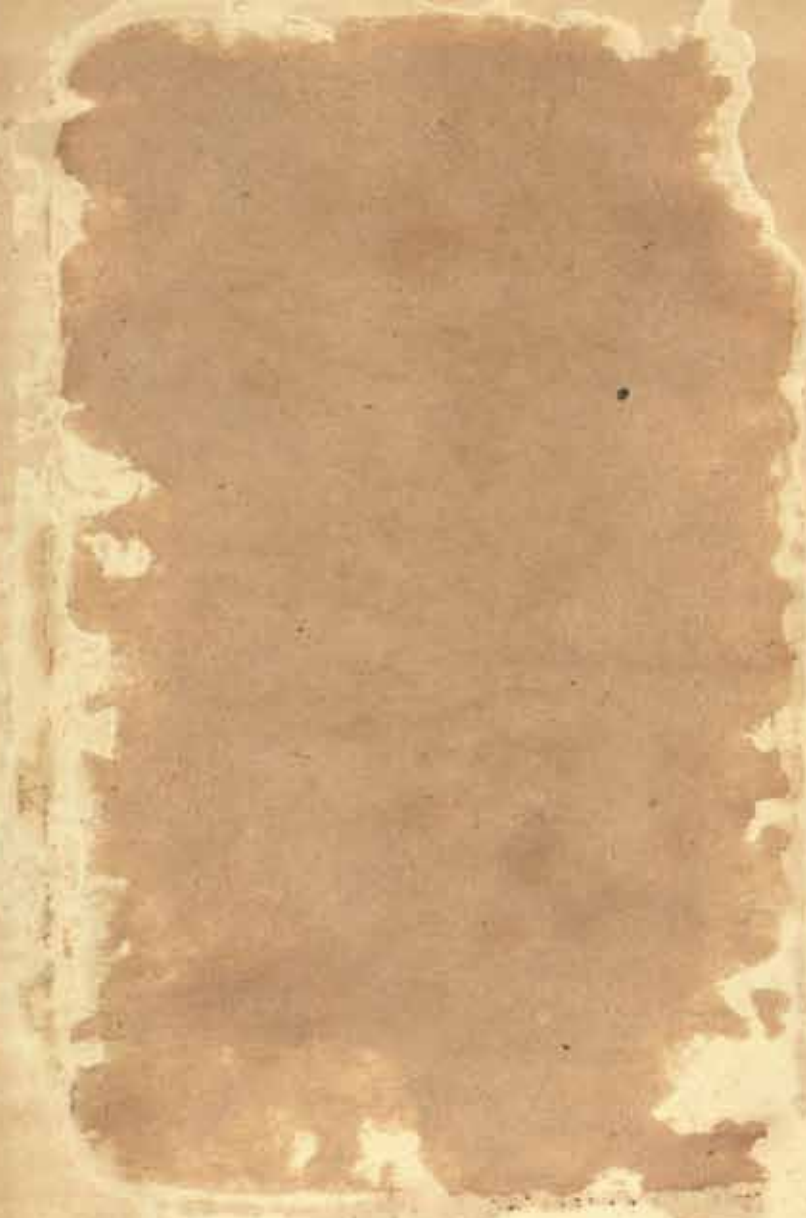


95. Village in the Thar Desert. Miniature of the Anup Singh School, late 17th Century. Coll. Ajit Ghose, Calcutta.









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